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THEOLOGY
OF THE
HEBREW CHRISTIANS.



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THEOLOGY

OF THE

HEBREW CHRISTIANS

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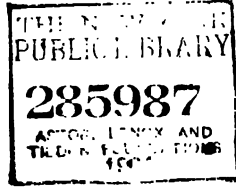
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PREFACE.

THE faith of modern Judaism is divided from Christianity by a broad line of demarcation, and denial of Christ has become an essential article of the Hebrew creed. But it was otherwise in the apostolic age: the apostles did not abandon the worship of Jehovah in consequence of their adhesion to Christ, the union of the two creeds subsisted for a whole generation in the Primitive Church, and prevailed throughout what was then its most important section. Its influence is distinctly perceptible in all parts of the New Testament, the perfect harmony of the Law and the Gospel forms a fundamental principle of the Epistle of St James in particular, the identity of the Christian Church, as heir of the promises, with the Israelite people


and priesthood gives the keynote to the first Epistle of St Peter, and the Hebrew sentiment pervading the church of the Circumcision supplies the motive for the Epistle to the Hebrews. Israelite training exercised undoubtedly a powerful influence in determining the dogmatic form of Christian truth. These pages are an attempt to realise the position and feelings of Hebrew Christians in apostolic times as the natural result of their twofold religious education, and to gain by the study of their theology a correct appreciation of the truths which it was their function to reveal.



THEOLOGY OF HEBREW CHRISTIANS.

THE history of the Primitive Church is gathered almost exclusively from the pages of the New Testament: few trustworthy records of it are found elsewhere. Its leading facts are sketched in the Acts of the Apostles down to the conversion of the Gentiles. At that point the book takes the form of a personal narrative recording the life of St Paul, and loses sight of the general fortunes of the church. The contemporary labours of his brother apostles in other spheres do not fall within the range of the historian. Incidentally he reveals the existence of a vigorous Christian life in Palestine and Syria; but it forms no part of his purpose to depict the condition of the churches of the circumcision. Their internal history must be gathered from the epistles, if at all: but these again furnish no

such abundant means for ascertaining their doctrine, practice or discipline, as do the epistles of St Paul in the case of the Pauline churches by the lively pictures which they present of their internal condition. For these pictures, though from the nature of the case occasional and fragmentary, illustrate so clearly the faith and practice of those churches as to enable the reader to follow with intelligence and interest the movements of parties and the divergences of doctrine and opinion. These personal and circumstantial details are however the special characteristic of St Paul's epistles, and are not found in the other epistles of the New Testament: which convey but scanty information with regard to the circumstances of those churches to which they were addressed or the mutual relations which subsisted between them and the writer; the reader forms no distinct conception of the prevalent manner of life and modes of thought, the besetting doubts and spiritual dangers of the time. This comparative silence of scripture has left the greater part of the history of the churches of the circumcision veiled in obscurity.



Yet we cannot doubt that they played for many years a leading part in shaping Christian faith and doctrine. This was inevitable from the nature of their position ; our better acquaintance with the life and writings of St Paul may naturally tempt us to regard him as the guiding mind of the early church ; but a moment's thought will convince us that he was certainly not so within the sphere of the other apostles, whatever he may have been in his own. The traditional authority of the church of Jerusalem and the living voice of the Twelve carried during his lifetime far greater weight than the opinions or arguments of St Paul with all the early converts. The predominant influence of that church preserved also amidst the Hebrew Christians of Palestine and Syria a closer identity of doctrine and practice than was possible in the scattered churches of Asia Greece and Italy. For Jerusalem was recognised at least during the lifetime of the apostles as the centre of Christian teaching and authority: the deference which St Paul himself exhibited on more than one occasion to its opinion shews the respect



paid to it by Hebrew Christians in general. On the contrary the Christian communities, which were planted by St Paul and his companions in the great cities of the Gentiles, though destined eventually to grow into mighty churches, were at first feeble and isolated: their converts consisted partly of Jews and proselytes, partly of devout Gentiles; and this mixed origin exposed them to special danger of intestine division and party struggles: and though the championship of St Paul secured the final independence of Gentile Christianity, yet even in the Pauline churches the party of the circumcision enlisted not seldom on their side the sympathies of the majority, and ventured at times boldly to set at nought the authority of the apostle. It is a question how long this spirit of Judaism maintained its predominance amidst these Hebrew Christians who constituted throughout the first generation of the church the most compact and highly organised body of Christian opinion, and what cause occasioned its eventual extinction. We know from the life and letters of St Paul that they maintained their Israelite opinions and

their allegiance to the Law as stedfastly after their conversion as before ; they found no difficulty in reconciling obedience to Moses with faith in Christ ; though Christians, they were jealous for the Law ; and though reluctantly induced by the mediation of the leading apostles to tolerate the emancipation of Gentile Christians from its dominion, their own attachment to it continued unshaken ; they even regarded with distrust the teaching of St Paul, because they doubted his fidelity to the Law. Nor did the gradual extension of the gospel among the Gentiles produce within the apostolic age any considerable effect in weakening this Israelite element within the church of Christ ; the later letters of St Paul indicate its undiminished strength ; and suggest the probability that it preserved its vitality till the destruction of the holy city and temple brought about, in the natural order of God's providence, the extinction of Judaism in the main body of the church as a necessary consequence of their downfall. But the Hebrew Christians themselves must after all be the most correct exponents of whatever is

distinctive in their theology. Besides the gospels, into whose more subtle differences of character I do not propose to enter, we possess sundry epistles written by apostles of the circumcision or their disciples. Those of St John belong to a later date: but St Peter and St James were the most authoritative teachers of the church of the circumcision; and each has left us one epistle of undisputed authenticity as a specimen of their teaching. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a still more instructive authority as to the tone of religious thought which prevailed in the Hebrew church. But the first step towards the right understanding and employment of that epistle in illustration of church history must be to prove that it was written, as its title and contents indicate, by a Hebrew Christian, or rather by a member of one of the churches of the circumcision, to his own church. For by a strange irony of fortune the ecclesiastical tradition of many centuries has agreed to connect its authorship with an opposite school of thought, and to attribute it either to St Paul himself or to some of his immediate fellow labourers. The

object of the first of the following essays is to investigate its authorship, to vindicate for the epistle its true place in church history, to differentiate its theology from that of St Paul, and identify it with that of the apostles of the circumcision; and further to determine the occasion which called it forth. If I am right in my conclusion that the epistle was written during the siege of Jerusalem to reanimate the failing faith of the Hebrew church, as they beheld with dismay the approaching doom of the holy places the earthly priesthood and the material sacrifices, not only does its own meaning stand out more vividly, but it throws considerable light on the theology and the history of the Hebrew churches at the same time. The moment was critical and tested their faith to its very foundations; for hitherto their belief in the gospel had in no way shaken their reverence for the law of their fathers, or their humble dependence on the written word: they were haunted by no inward doubts or dim sense of latent antagonism between the two revelations: their acceptance of Jesus as the promised Messiah had not disturbed

their faith in the ancient ritual, though it had deepened its spiritual meaning. They had welcomed both revelations alike as gracious messages from the same heavenly Father ; and they clung to both with the same childlike submission of spirit and obedience of life. But now they stood at the dividing of the ways ; the time had come when God saw fit to sweep away the material structure of Israelite worship by the desolation of the holy places. At this crisis the author's faith in the Son of God rose triumphant from amid the ruins of the ancient ritual. The sudden loss of materialistic aids to faith cleared and strengthened his spiritual vision. He perceived, and taught his Hebrew brethren, that the only true priesthood, the only true covenant, or sacrifices, are spiritual and eternal : the effacement of transitory shadows rendered more distinctly visible the eternal realities. But the lapse of time which intervened between the birth of the Christian church and this event is significant: the scaffolding was not thrown down till the building of the church had been safely reared: an interval of many years pre-

ceded the final trial of faith: God provided a prolonged period of transition from the old faith to the new. The converts were not summoned to cast away altogether their old Israelite trust in material sacrifices, until Christian faith and practice had long been educating them to a higher spiritual faith. The gradual development of distinctive Christian doctrine continued for nearly forty years before they were bidden to separate themselves wholly from their Jewish brethren, and to recognise in the destruction of the temple and its ordinances God's final condemnation of material sacrifices. During this period of silent but steady transition the hearts of the chosen people were slowly moulded by the new creed, the language which had been previously consecrated to Israel's use acquired a new significance on the lips of Christians, and the Christian Sacraments took by degrees the place of the Israelite altar. Before the awful consummation, when altar and sanctuary perished together in the flames, the Hebrew Christians had been prepared to discern the imperishable spiritual altar which Christ had set up in its

place, upon which he had offered himself the ideal sacrifice, and on which Christians were hereafter to offer spiritual sacrifices which should never cease. The second essay deals with this process of Christian education: its object is to trace the development of spiritual conceptions in connexion with the Israelite law of sacrifice, the transmission of those conceptions to the early converts, and their embodiment as living truths in the sacraments and the religious language of the Christian church. This enquiry possesses a doctrinal interest more important than its historical: for the terms employed by the original believers to express their system of Christian doctrine were the fruit of their Israelite training: and the more clearly the steps are traced of the religious education through which the apostles passed, the greater precision is attained in interpreting the language of the Christian canon, and the clearer becomes our understanding of the mysteries of Christian doctrine which it unfolded.

THE
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

No contemporary record has preserved the name of the author to whom we are indebted for the Epistle to the He-
brews: the time, place and circumstances of its composition are all uncertain. The book itself was well known to the Christian church at the earliest date of which any records exist by the same title as it now bears, the Epistle to the Hebrews: it was admired quoted and treasured by the earliest Christian Fathers both at Rome and Alexandria. But no external tradition was preserved which throws much real light on its authorship. For though St Paul was from the fifth to the sixteenth century accepted without question as its author, the acceptance implied little more than silent acquiescence in a received tradition: the awakening of independent

Authorship
unknown.

thought and revival of Greek criticism at the close of this period broke at once the apparent unanimity of the church. Critical examination of the early fathers reveals moreover a like absence of unanimity on the subject in the primitive church. The original tradition has been traced to the church of Alexandria: two great fathers of that church, Clement and Origen, associate St Paul's name with the epistle, though hesitating to assign to him more than a share in its origin. Clement in two fragments of a work preserved¹ to us by Eusebius argues on the assumption that he was the author. In one passage he explains the absence of the usual apostolical greeting on the ground that Paul's commission was to the Gentiles, whereas the Lord himself was apostle to the Hebrews: this argument he reproduces from an earlier authority, his master Pantaenus, whom he designates as the blessed elder. In the other passage he advances a fresh explanation of the omissions as a prudent concession to Jewish prejudice: he further sug-

Alexandrian traditions.

¹ See Euseb. *H. E.* vi. 14.

gests that the original epistle was written in Hebrew by St Paul and translated by St Luke into its present Greek form: in this way he endeavours to account for the resemblance of its language to that of St Luke's other writings. It appears therefore that he did not entirely accept St Paul as author, but discussed the question as one quite open to debate: so that his testimony, though on the whole favorable to the claims of the apostle, cannot be alleged without important qualifications. Origen¹ also, though he too quotes it as St Paul's, discusses the authorship as open to doubt: he contrasts the finished Greek style of the epistle with Paul's own account of himself as rude in speech; expresses admiration of the thoughts, as with good reason ascribed to Paul by the 'ancients' (probably Pantaenus and his contemporaries in the school of Alexandria), and such as to justify any church in that belief; but decides that those thoughts must have been clothed in language by some disciple of Paul. He professes entire ignorance as to who was the actual writer; but quotes

¹ See Euseb. *H. E.* vi. 25.

two traditions as existing in his day, one in favour of Clement of Rome, the other of Luke. Origen therefore accepted the authorship of St Paul in a very limited sense, as parent of the thoughts embodied in the epistle; he does this apparently in deference to an old prescription prevailing in his church, but does not hesitate to discuss the question as uncertain, and to attribute the style and language at all events to some disciple of St Paul, whom he regarded as his master's mouthpiece.

Other Greek churches must have adopted this view at a later time; for it was apparently quite unknown to Hippolytus and Irenaeus¹ in the second century: whereas later Greek fathers quote the epistle

¹ Irenaeus, in his work against Heresies, quotes every one of St Paul's epistles except the short epistle to Philemon, yet refrains from adducing one of the many apposite passages he might have found in this epistle. This can only be explained by his not accounting it as St Paul's. If Photius be correct (*Bibl.* 232), Stephan Gobar asserted explicitly: *Ἰππόλυτος καὶ Εἰρηναῖος τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιστολὴν Παύλου οὐκ ἐκείνου εἶναι φασιν*. Some doubt however has been thrown on the accuracy of this statement in consequence of Eusebius having taken no notice of the fact.

habitually as St Paul's. Contrary traditions prevailed in the western church during the first four centuries: Tertullian¹ quotes it as an acknowledged work of Barnabas; Caius² the presbyter at Rome mentions the thirteen epistles of St Paul, to the exclusion of this epistle. Even in the fifth century Jerome³ contrasts its continued rejection from the list of canonical

¹ Tertullian (*de Pudicitia* c. 20). "Extat et Barnabae titulus ad Hebraeos, adeo satis auctoritatis viri, ut quem Paulus juxta se constituerit in abstinentiae tenore (1 Cor. ix. 6)...Et utique receptior apud ecclesias epistola Barnabae illo apocrypho pastore moechorum (sc. Pastor of Hermas). Monens itaque discipulos 'omissis omnibus initiis...'" (Heb. vi. 1-8).

² See Euseb. *H. E.* vi. 20.

³ Ep. 73 ad Ev. § 4. "Epistola ad Hebraeos, quam omnes Graeci recipiunt, et nonnulli Latinorum."

Ep. ad Dardanum § 3. "Illud nostris dicendum est, hanc epistolam quae inscribitur ad Hebraeos, non solum ab ecclesiis Orientis, sed ab omnibus retro ecclesiasticis Graeci sermonis scriptoribus quasi Pauli apostoli suscipi, licet plerique eam vel Barnabae vel Clementis arbitrentur: et nihil interesse cujus sit, cum ecclesiastici viri sit, et quotidie ecclesiarum lectione celebretur. Quod si eam Latinorum consuetudo non recipit inter scripturas canonicas, nec Graecorum quidem ecclesiae Apocalypsin Joannis eadem libertate suscipiunt: et tamen nos utramque suscipimus, nequaquam hujus temporis consuetudinem sed veterum scriptorum auctoritatem sequentes."

Comm. on Titus: "Siquis vult recipere eam epistolam quae sub nomine Pauli ad Hebraeos scripta est."

Scriptures by the majority of the Latin churches with its general acceptance by the Greeks as the work of St Paul. He himself quotes it as St Paul's, but frequently expresses uncertainty as to his authorship, and treats it as an open question. Augustine¹ acquiesces with less hesitation in the authorship of St Paul, but places it last among his epistles as not entitled to the same authority as the rest, and constantly employs its anonymous title 'Epistle to the Hebrews' to describe it. The influence of these two fathers sufficed to determine the gradual adhesion of the Latin churches to the same view as the Greek: and the natural disposition to associate a great anonymous work with a great name prevailed during the subsequent centuries throughout the Christian world.

This uncertainty in the voice of early Christian tradition throws us back on internal evidence as the most important factor in determining the authorship. The claims of Barnabas, St Luke, and Clement of

Claims of Barnabas, St Luke, Clement.

¹ Civ. Dei: "epistola quae inscribitur ad Hebraeos, quam plures apostoli Pauli esse dicunt, quidam vero negant."

Rome call for little investigation. That of Barnabas rests on the unsupported assertion of Tertullian, and not on any resemblance to other works attributed to him. The vocabulary of St Luke in his Gospel and Acts does present some striking resemblance to the language of the epistle, and some of the Alexandrian Fathers in consequence attributed to him at least a share in its literary composition. But common Hellenistic education, mutual intercourse, or study of each other's works are enough to explain such a resemblance; which is of little weight in comparison with the essential differences of style and spirit which separate the two authors. The many parallel passages in Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians are manifest quotations¹; and every page of that epistle

¹ The following are the most obvious : τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν 1. μετανοίας τόπον 7. ἐν δέρμασιν αἰγέλοις καὶ μηλωταῖς 17. οἱ οἱρανοὶ σαλευόμενοι 20. τὰ εὐάρεστα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ 21. ἐρευνητῆς ἐννοιῶν καὶ ἐνθυμήσεων 21. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ εἶ μὴ τὸ ψεύσασθαι 27. Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν ἀρχιερέα 36. ὃς ὦν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ, τοσοῦτῳ μείζων ἐστὶν ἀγγέλων, ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον ὄνομα κεκληρονόμηκεν. γέγραπται γὰρ οὕτως, ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα· ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ Τιῷ αὐτοῦ οὕτως εἶπεν ὁ Δεσπότης, Τιὸς μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε....καὶ πάλιν λέγει πρὸς

exhibits the incapacity of its author to produce a work like the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The theory of Apollos' authorship counts Claims of Apollos. weighty names amongst its advocates from Luther downwards. But it is entirely unsupported by positive evidence; no suspicion of the fact can well have prevailed in his own times; for if so famous a name had once been connected with the epistle, it is difficult to conceive that all tradition of it could have died away before the days of Clement and Origen in that very Alexandrian church of which he was the earliest distinguished member. The silence of primitive tradition appears to me conclusive against the theory. Nor can I see any ground for identifying him with the author beyond the fact that both were Hellenists, and both eloquent interpreters of the Messianic import of the Jewish Scriptures. Its advocates assume that the author's name must be sought

αἰτὸν, Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἀν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου 36. The following quotations also are common to both: *Μωυσῆς πιστὸς ἐν δ'λω τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ θεράπων—ταχὺ ἤξει καὶ οὐ χρονεῖ—ὄν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ Κύριος παιδεύει, μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται.*



amongst the small circle of fellow-labourers whom the epistles of St Paul and the Acts of the Apostles have made known to us; I can find nothing however in the epistle which suggests that the author was a companion or associate of St Paul; while there is much to indicate that he was not Apollos. For Apollos was converted by Aquila and Priscilla, who had never seen the Lord; while the author lays stress upon the fact that he was established in the faith by the personal testimony of actual hearers of the Lord: again Apollos' sphere of labour is not known to have extended beyond the Gentile churches of Ephesus Corinth and the coasts of the Aegaeon sea, whereas the author belonged apparently to one of the Hebrew churches in the neighbourhood of Palestine¹: Apollos is mentioned by St Paul as his own equal in age and standing, though without the apostolic dignity, whereas the author belonged probably like Timothy to a younger generation and wrote after the death of St Paul. But it

¹ Some conclusions are here unavoidably anticipated, which will be discussed more fully in later pages.

has been further urged in support of this theory that Apollos was an Alexandrian by ^{Alexandrianism.} birth, and that the epistle has an Alexandrian bias. The particular theological bias of the epistle will claim our attention hereafter. But this argument implies that one definite school of thought prevailed at Alexandria, and that Apollos writes as a distinct exponent of those opinions: it assumes therefore a local connexion between the city of Alexandria and the views called Alexandrian which is by no means obvious, and a doctrinal bias in the whole Septuagint translation which can only be discovered in particular books. Alexandria had been to an earlier generation of Jews the principal centre of Hellenic culture; it became under the Ptolemies the great mart for commercial intercourse between the east and west, and their enlightened policy fostered a Jewish colony in Alexandria, which was brought into closer contact with the language, literature and philosophy of Greece than their compatriots; in Alexandria therefore was executed under royal patronage the Greek version

of the Jewish Scriptures. But the points of contact between Jewish thought and Hellenic culture had been multiplied indefinitely before the Christian era: Alexander's conquests opened many channels of intercourse between Greek and Oriental races throughout Western Asia: Jewish colonies flourished in Asia Minor: Greek monarchs ruled in Persia and Syria; and the author was as likely to be imbued with Hellenist opinions in a Syrian as in an Egyptian home. Hellenic influence penetrated very largely into Palestine itself; and though the Maccabean revolt checked the progress of Hellenic idolatry and stimulated a patriotic reaction within its limits, the Greek writings of St John, St Peter, and St James are a standing evidence of the vigorous life which Hellenic language and literature retained in the very centre of Judaism. The diffusion of philosophy followed naturally on this spread of the Greek language: and a semireligious, semiphilosophic mysticism sprang from the alliance between Jewish religion and Hellenic philosophy; which has been designated by modern critics as Alexandrianism be-

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=| Cabalistic
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cause Philo of Alexandria is the principal exponent of it now surviving. But the opinions of Philo were not confined to Egypt: the same alliance was formed in Asia Minor, and there developed at a later period into various forms of Gnosticism. The study of Philo's works extended throughout the Hellenistic schools of theology; the author was undoubtedly familiar with them, as was also St Paul; but if in dealing with kindred subjects he does not disdain to borrow from the language of Philo, this by no means implies sympathy with his views or spirit.

It is clear that a certain presumption is created in favour of St Paul's authorship by the tradition of the Alexandrian church; and long prescription gives this view a claim to attentive consideration. The testimony of tradition is however by no means uniform or consistent enough to overcome the weight of internal evidence against it. A single passage of the epistle presents to any fair reader an almost fatal objection to the hypothesis. St Paul's jealous vindication of his

Objections to the authorship of St Paul: i. his apostolic claims,

own apostolic claims forms a prominent feature in more than one of his epistles; the attacks made upon his authority forced him to self-assertion; and he is therefore most emphatic in maintaining that he received not the gospel of man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ¹. The author on the contrary is careful to class himself with those who received it at second-hand from the actual hearers of the Lord². The contradiction between the letter and the spirit of the two statements is so palpable as almost to exclude the possibility of reconciling them as proceeding from the same pen.

Another serious objection presents itself on the threshold of the epistle. It is anonymous, whereas the apostle ^{2. anonymous opening,} upon principle repudiated anonymous writing³, carefully addressing every letter in his own name with the addition of his apostolic greeting, and subscribing them with his own hand. The explanations of this difficulty offered by the

¹ Gal. i. 12.

² Heb. ii. 3.

³ 2 Thess. ii. 2, iii. 17.

Alexandrian Fathers, that St Paul omitted his name from motives of prudence or humility, are obviously unsatisfactory; yet no more satisfactory ground for the omission has been suggested by subsequent critics.

Nor can this omission of the author's name, which forms so marked a contrast to the epistles of St Paul, be regarded as a mere formal or accidental distinction; for it accords with the tone of the epistle and is characteristic of the author's mind. By whatever motive he was actuated, whether modesty or reserve or a sense of literary dignity, it is obvious that he uniformly shrinks from personal self-assertion: the rest of the epistle is in complete harmony with the anonymous commencement so far as regards the suppression of the author's personality: drop a few words of personal allusion at the close, and it becomes in spite of the deep undercurrent of strong feeling a sermon rather than a letter—a studied composition, finished according to systematic rules of logical arrangement and rhetorical art, alternating elaborate argument with fervid exhorta-

3. impersonal character of the epistle,

tion. Now it is on the contrary the characteristic charm of the letters of St Paul, regarded as specimens of letter-writing, that they are so intensely personal: they sprang out of the pressing needs of his apostolic work, and reveal the very heart of the writer, the personal faith in Christ that sustained him, the personal cares that weighed upon him, the personal love of the brethren that animated him: they teem with human interest, and that interest centres in the free and unreserved expression of the writer's Christian affections joys and sorrows.

Where again do we catch a gleam of that exulting hope with which the apostle always anticipated the universal triumph of the gospel throughout the Jewish as well as the Gentile world? can we conceive that the same pen from which issued that passionate desire that Israel might be saved (Rom. x. 1) and that triumphant assurance that in the end all Israel would be saved (Rom. xi. 26), wrote also the warnings of judgment and vengeance whose unrelieved gloom saddens some of the pages of this epistle? Nor are

4. pervading gloom,

these isolated passages : the same sharp contrast of light and shade is observable wherever the two authors disclose their respective anticipations of the future. The shadow of the approaching day of wrath broods over the epistle, and the coming doom of his nation rests sadly on the spirit of the writer : through all his utterances there runs an undertone of melancholy earnestness, as persistent as the bright visions of final victory which illuminated the spirit of the apostle.

The two authors differ materially in language : St Paul was not free from ^{5. language and style,} Hebraism, and derives force from the simplicity of his language : the Author expresses himself in idiomatic and polished Greek, and delights in the pomp of stately phrases¹ and full-sounding derivatives². They

¹ A few instances may suffice: ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτῆρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ—ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς—εἰς τὸ διηρηκέες—εἰς τὸ παντελές—τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν.

² The following words occur nowhere else in the New Testament: πολυμερῶς, πολυτρόπως, προσοχθίζειν, διαφορώτερος, σαββατισμός, τετραχληλισμένος, μεσιτεύειν, δυσερμήνευτος, μετριοπαθεῖν, ἀκατάλυτος, ἀγεραλόγητος, ἀπαράβατος, αἱματεκχυσία, ἐνκαινίζειν, ἀφανισμός, συνκακουχέισθαι, ὑποστολή, φανταζόμενος, καταγωνίζειν,

differ in the elementary framework of their sentences by employment of different constructions and different connecting particles¹. Dialectical subtlety, impetuous bursts of natural eloquence, mighty thoughts struggling for expression in disjointed sentences are the characteristic features of St Paul's style. Rhetorical skill, studied antithesis, even flow of faultless grammar, and measured march of rhythmical periods combine to stamp upon the epistle a distinct and unique character of its own.

The comparison of the author's theology

τελειωτής, τυμπανίζειν, μισθαποδοσία, ὀρκωμοσία, ἀλυσιτελής, εὐπερίστατος.

¹ Diversity of style is more easily felt by the reader than expressed by the critic, without at least a tedious analysis of language: one simple and tangible test presents itself however in the use of connecting particles, inasmuch as these determine the structure of sentences. A minute comparison of these possesses therefore real importance in the differentiation of language. Now in the epistles of St Paul *εἰ τις* occurs 50 times, *εἴτε* 63, *ποτε* (in affirmative clauses) 19, *εἴτα* (in enumerations) 6, *εἰ δὲ καὶ* 4, *εἶπερ* 5, *ἐκτός εἰ μή* 3, *εἴγε* 4, *μήπως* 12, *μηκέτι* 10, *μενούργε* 3, *ἐάν* 88 times, while none of them are found in the epistle except *ἐάν* and that only once (or twice) except in quotations. On the other hand *ὅθεν* which occurs 6 times and *ἐάνπερ* which occurs 3 times in the epistle are never used by St Paul.

with that of St Paul possesses peculiar interest :

6. *theology.* for not only does it reveal important differences between the two : but these differences of doctrine represent a divergence of views which cannot be referred to personal independence of thought alone. For they correspond to the fundamental distinction between the aspect of the gospel presented by St Paul to the Gentile converts, and that presented by St Peter and St James to the churches of the circumcision : and though less strongly accentuated than in the Epistle of St James, compel us to classify the author amidst the disciples of St Peter rather than St Paul.

The subject on which St Paul differed in principle from the apostles of the circumcision was the relation of the gospel to the law. By connecting God's new covenant in Christ directly with the original covenant made with Abraham, and declaring the Gentile believers to be children of Abraham and heirs of the promises made to the fathers he ignored the authority of the law of Moses.

Pauline theology.



He treated the law as an incidental and temporary addition, almost of the nature of an interruption of God's original covenant¹—necessitated by man's transgressions, and therefore just and necessary, but still an interruption. Circumcision² itself was the seal of a bondage to which he himself and all who had been circumcised were subject. But while he fully acknowledged³ his own obligation to keep the law, he did not hesitate to proclaim to the Gentiles the entire abrogation of the law for them in Christ, and the establishment in its place of a new law of the spirit, based upon the voice of conscience as enlightened by the spirit of God. This freedom from the law he regarded as the charter of Gentile liberty⁴; and as apostle of the Gentiles he vindicated it with the utmost resolution. His special fitness for his office as apostle to the Gentiles, his success in preaching to them, and the opposition which he encountered from the Jews were all closely connected with this especial doctrine by which

¹ Gal. iii. 19.

² Gal. v. 3.

³ Act. xxi. 24—26.

⁴ Gal. v. 1.



Christianity was freed from the trammels of Judaism. It was the inevitable outcome of his life ; for his whole education had taught him to view the Law in the purely legal spirit of a Pharisee: with all the energy of a passionate nature he had staked his salvation on the doctrine of merit by works of righteousness : all the zeal of his early manhood had been enlisted in that cause : it was not till after all his religious system had been definitely settled, and in the prime of life, that an overpowering conviction snapped with a sudden wrench the links that bound him to his party and his cause : that lightning shock shattered at once and for ever his faith in Judaism, and placed a lifelong gulf between him and his past belief. But this stupendous revulsion of his moral nature did not efface his Pharisaic training, though it taught him to condemn it with his whole soul. His view of the law remained what the teaching of the Pharisaic schools had made it : he saw in it still that doctrine of saving works which had become hateful to his newly-awakened Christian conscience, and from the moment that Christ



became all in all to him, faith in Christ was life, the law without Christ was death. His attitude towards the Old Testament Scriptures was determined by this view of the law: however freely he might resort to them for purposes of argument or illustration, however precious he might count them as the Word of God spoken to the fathers, he claimed absolute authority over them as an apostle in his Master's name. Even the language in which he describes the redeeming work of Christ is coloured by this legal training. While he pronounces mankind to be lying under a sentence of condemnation¹, the Jew by the verdict of his own law, the Gentile by that of the moral law within him, and regards the free grace of God in Christ as justification², we feel that he is dwelling still in a legal and scholastic atmosphere. Justification by faith alone antecedent to all works forms the cardinal doctrine of his theology; he looks on men as at enmity with God because of a broken law³, and argues thence the necessity for a recon-

¹ Rom. iii. 9.

² Rom. iii. 20—26.

³ Rom. v. 10.

ciliation¹ which may make peace between God and them before they can become children of God by adoption. Such were the distinctive features of the Pauline system of theology, the theology of a converted Pharisee. But these were not the views of all the apostles: Theology of St James. for all had not imbibed from their Jewish education the same conception of the law. All Israelites were not Pharisees, and this narrow Pharisaic view of the law as a means of establishing their own righteousness was by no means universal amidst them. The humble Israelite on the contrary had derived from it a more thorough conviction of sin rather than any encouragement of his pride, it had revealed to him a higher conception of God's holiness than he could have framed without it, and provided discipline and education towards the attainment of that holiness. It had nourished in a hundred ways the higher life of the spirit within him: the Psalmist testifies for instance: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes¹." The religious experience of such men had not taught them to desire that the verdict of the Law against them should be annulled, but that they should be strengthened to fulfil it. To men of this type the Gospel presented itself not as a message of deliverance from the condemnation of the Law, but as a fresh means of grace for more perfect obedience to its commands. Such I take to be the character of St James, and accordingly he viewed the Gospel as 'the perfect law of liberty', 'the royal law'; and herein his teaching follows faithfully the path traced by our Lord himself in the Sermon on the Mount. His conception of faith differs in a corresponding manner from St Paul's: its essence consists not so much in the abandonment of all self-confidence, that we may throw ourselves on the merit of a crucified Saviour, as in the sustaining principle of a life given to God. He knew therefore of no possible antagonism²

¹ Ps. xix. 7, 8.

² Jam. ii. 14—26.

between faith and works; for faith (as he understood it) was the motive power which produced all good works. When again he spoke of *righteousness* (justification) he meant, not like St Paul¹ the original acceptance before God which makes the starting point of Christian life, but the inward peace of conscience which is the fruit of holy living, and is consequent upon works of faith².

Compare now the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Theology of the
Epistle.

The unbroken continuity of the old and new dispensations, of the Law and the Gospel, is a striking feature of the epistle. The Christian and the Jewish Church are spoken of as one and the same household of God³; to which Moses belonged as servant,

¹ Their different use of the theological terms *faith* and *justification* explains their apparent contradiction in language. St Paul spoke of the justification of the convert before God, and argued that Abraham at his call was justified by faith only, i.e. that God saw and accepted the changed heart before the change was manifested in the life. St James spoke of the justification of a truly Christian life, and argued that Abraham was justified by his works, i. e. that the changed heart manifested itself of necessity in the holy living consequent upon it. Both doctrines are obviously true and consistent.

² Jam. iii. 18.

³ Heb. iii. 1-6.

Christ as Son; of which we are members now, as patriarchs kings and prophets were of old. The Gospel is presented, not as antagonistic to the Law, but as the natural climax of the Mosaic revelation and the true key to its comprehension: Christianity appears before us as the final development of Judaism. So far is the Law from being regarded as an interruption of an earlier covenant with Abraham that that covenant is not even mentioned¹: the first covenant is that of Sinai, the second is the Christian, and no distinction in spirit is recognised between the two: the function of the first is simply preparatory for the second: the difference between them is that between maturity and immaturity, between the ceremonial type and the spiritual antitype. Nay, the Law is itself designated as an earlier Gospel which failed only for lack of faith². Furthermore its

¹ This silence is rendered the more conspicuous by the nature of the argument. Whereas the superiority of the earlier *priesthood* of Melchisedek is strongly urged to prove the temporary character of the Levitical, the inconsistency of the Mosaic *covenant* with the patriarchal is never alleged, as it is by St Paul, to establish its temporary and transitory character.

² Heb. iv. 2.

legal aspect is ignored that the attention may be concentrated on its ritual: it is regarded as a system of worship¹, not as a code of laws: its most important revelation is contained in its types, and by means of these it becomes a divine anticipation of redemption through Christ. This view of the Law is in perfect harmony with the Old Testament, but the point of view is distinct from that of St Paul. Again the author's conception of *faith* and *righteousness* tallies completely with that of St James. He regards faith as an energetic principle of action, the power by which God's heroes have in successive generations fought the Lord's battle and done his work on earth: he selects amongst others the same examples of it as St James, viz. the sacrifice of Isaac² and the adhesion of Rahab to Israel³. Whereas St James describes the fruit of righteousness⁴

¹ Hence the change of the ceremonial law by the introduction of a spiritual worship in its place is spoken of in vii. 12 as 'a change of law.'

² Heb. xi. 17 and Jam. ii. 21.

³ Heb. xi. 31 and Jam. ii. 25.

⁴ Jam. iii. 18.

as sown in peace of them that make peace, he commends the peaceable fruit of righteousness¹: and elsewhere he records that Noah became heir of righteousness², i.e. inherited God's approval of his life as righteous, by the faith which he manifested in the building of the ark. Again, there is in the epistle no recognition of Gentile Christianity; the Gentiles are never mentioned throughout the epistle: their very existence is ignored (apparently as lying outside the author's sphere of work) except so far as they are comprehended under such terms as '*the people*' and '*the seed of Abraham*' on the tacit assumption that they would pass into the Christian Church through the gate of Judaism. In accordance with this view the process of redemption is presented, not as a reconciliation³ of enemies, but as a leading⁴ of God's children to salvation, a cleansing⁵ from pollution, they being already members of Israel and so already brought into covenant with God. Nor

¹ Heb. xii. 11.

² Heb. xi. 7.

³ The original of ii. 17 speaks of *atonement*, not *reconciliation* as in our version.

⁴ Heb. ii. 5—10.

⁵ Heb. i. 3, ix. 14.

is there any claim of authority over the Old Testament; the teaching of the epistle is constantly based upon it, and subordinated to it by reference repeatedly made to its authority as a supreme utterance of the Spirit. Furthermore the author differs widely from St Paul in his description of the work of the Spirit: while fully recognising his voice in Scripture and his endowment of the Church with his gifts, he preserves absolute silence as to his quickening, strengthening and purifying influences within the heart of the individual. The very term *sanctify*, by which St Paul describes this operation of the Spirit, is employed by him in a different sense, as descriptive of the effect produced by application of the blood of Christ¹. The scope of the epistle, which concentrates attention on the Christ himself, hardly suffices to explain so absolute a silence. When we find him adopting the language of the Book of Proverbs in describing the Father's part in training the human heart², we are disposed to see in his mode of expression the result of his Israelite

¹ Heb. x. 29, xiii. 12.

² Heb. xii. 5—10.

education: like the disciples of John the Baptist he had been brought up without so much as hearing that there was a Holy Spirit¹, and his language still retains the impress of early teaching. These views are not stated dogmatically; they lie for the most part outside the scope of his argument; but their incidental occurrence furnishes conclusive evidence that the author was, either by Israelite education, or by natural temperament, more in harmony with the objective teaching of St Peter and St James than with the subjective doctrine of St Paul, and disposed to dwell more on the practical duties of religion than on the subtle analysis of spiritual life. But the central argument of the epistle is still more distinctly at variance with the recorded opinions of St Paul: for that argument is aimed against the retention by the Israelites themselves of the Levitical system; its divine origin, its authority in the past, its value as a guide to spiritual truth are all admitted; but it is pronounced obsolete, the line of Aaron superseded by the Melchisedek-priest

¹ Acts xix. 2.

of the tribe of Judah, the Mosaic tabernacle by the greater and more perfect tabernacle.^{*} Now St Paul preached no such doctrine as this; the church of the circumcision was not ripe for it, nor willing to listen to it in his day. He was the champion of Gentile liberty, but not of Jewish: there is no hesitation in his assertion of Jewish bondage to ordinances. "I testify to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law¹." So he taught, and so he acted: he proclaimed² on the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem his complete acceptance of the ceremonial law, as one who 'walked orderly and kept the law.' Undoubtedly the temper of the church of the circumcision was at that time unanimously hostile to the abandonment of the Mosaic system of worship by their own body, whatever liberty they might be induced to concede to the Gentile Christians. The epistle therefore, though in this respect conceived in the spirit of St Paul, is a step in advance of his actual teaching, and was rendered possible only by changed circum-

¹ Gal. v. 3.

² Acts xxi. 23—26.

my work on the Sahih al ah p. 109 etc

stances, which the Jewish war brought with it in its train. The epistle contains undoubtedly striking parallels to the thoughts and doctrines of St Paul. Both are filled with the thought of the Divine Sonship, and the passage which dwells on the preincarnate life of Christ¹ follows closely the line of thought traced by the apostle in his Epistle to the Colossians, though with considerable independence of language. The doctrine of our union with Christ in his death that we may be partakers of his life, taught distinctly in Rom. vi., reappears in the obscure imagery of Heb. ix. 15—17. The bondage of the body during this mortal life declared in Heb. ii. 15 recalls forcibly Rom. viii. Coincidences of this sort add to the strong probability that the author was well acquainted with some at least of the epistles of St Paul, and largely influenced by them. Others may reasonably be imputed in the case of St Paul² as in that of St Luke to the common Hellenistic

¹ Heb. i. 2, 3. *This x1. 5*

² St Paul was less distinctly Hellenistic than the author or St Luke, for he completed his education in the Hebrew schools of Jerusalem, was many years associated with a Hebrew party

? *learned from the same - Hellenistic*

literature and teaching in which they had been trained, and particularly to their common use of the Septuagint¹, rather than to direct mutual influence upon each other.

Comparison of the first epistle of St Peter

Theology of St Peter compared with the epistle. reveals to us a still closer sympathy between our author and that apostle

than that which we have noted with the other great apostle of the circumcision. Both regarded the Law from the side of the Gospel, and not (as has been said of St James) the Gospel from the side of the Law; both saw in the Jewish worship a preparation for the Christian, and gave to the Old Testament an essentially Christian interpretation; their language however retains the stamp of their Israelite education, and

there, and spoke when occasion demanded in Hebrew; but this is noted in Acts xxi. 49 as exceptional, his early years were spent in the Greek city of Tarsus, and during his ministry he habitually wrote and spoke in Greek.

¹ Examination of a single book of the Septuagint suggests how largely they were indebted to it. In glancing through the book of Wisdom I noticed the following characteristic words *ὑπόστασις, βεβαλωσις, ἔκβασις, τελειοῦσθαι* applied to persons, *ἐντρομος, τεχνίτης, εὐάρεστος* common to these authors; the list might be indefinitely enlarged by careful study of the Septuagint.

its imagery is coloured by Hebrew recollections: the spirit of the Hebrew prophets survives in both; just as the Jews looked forward to the restoration as a definite historical crisis, so both authors conceive the Christian *hope*¹ and Christian *salvation*² as objective realities³ and an eventual future inheritance reserved till the second coming of Christ. St Peter, like the author, regards *faith* as steadfast trust in an unseen God which sustains his servants under temptation, and secures them final inheritance of his promises⁴, and *righteousness* as an upright life⁵. And the more minutely we examine their theological language, the closer appears their sympathy in religious thought. Again and again we find in St Peter's epistle the germ of the author's thought, or the exact form of its expression. Both emphatically connect the

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3 and Heb. vi. 18.

² 1 Pet. i. 5—10 and Heb. i. 14, ix. 28.

³ Salvation is commonly presented by St Paul subjectively as the personal blessing of true Christians on earth, and even as an actual present possession in the spirit (Eph. ii. 5, 8; 2 Cor. vi. 2).

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 5—9, v. 9.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 24, iii. 14.

sufferings of Christ with our future glory¹ as two coordinate parts of God's scheme of redemption: in both the same prominence is given to Christ's fellowship with us in suffering and to the value of suffering as a necessary discipline²: but with just that delicate shade of difference which resulted from the different circumstances of the writers. St Peter writes of Christ's sufferings with the vividness of an eye-witness, the author as one who had heard them recorded by others. They alone make emphatic mention of *the blood of sprinkling*³. They alone designate the Lord by the title of *the Shepherd*⁴ which the Gospel of St John has since made so familiar; and by that of *Captain*⁵, suggested by the type of the earlier Jesus (Joshua). They alone insist on our privileges⁶ as members of

¹ 1 Pet. i. 11 and Heb. ii. 10. If the text of 1 Pet. iii. 18 be *κράθεν*, both authors also connect the sufferings of Christ with the result of leading us to glory, or to God: but the word is doubtful.

² 1 Pet. ii. 19—23, iv. 1, 13, and Heb. ii. 10—18, v. 7, 8, xii. 2—8.

³ 1 Pet. i. 2 and Heb. xii. 24.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 25, v. 3, and Heb. xiii. 20.

⁵ Ἀρχηγός. Heb. ii. 10, xii. 2, and Acts iii. 15, v. 31.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 5 and Heb. iii. 6.

the 'house of God'; and connect the possession of a good conscience with good habits¹ of life. They alone make special reference to the blessing pronounced by the ninth beatitude on those who suffer reproach for Christ's sake². They end their epistles with a similar form of blessing³ (modified only by reference to the different contents of the epistles), then a doxology, an apology for their brief exhortation, and salutations. The wide divergence of the two epistles in their style and general scope makes these coincidences more remarkable; and their significance is increased by their occurring in the sphere of Christian doctrine. The natural inference from them is that the author was either a personal disciple of St Peter or a diligent student of his epistle; and the whole character of his theology combines to prove him a convert of the Twelve rather than a disciple of St Paul.

¹ *Ἀναστροφή, ἀναστρέφειν*. 1 Pet. iii. 16 and Heb. xiii. 18.

² 1 Pet. iv. 14 and Heb. xi. 26. The Greek student will notice further that the expressions *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου, λόγος ζωῆς, ἀναφέρειν ἁμαρτίας, θυσίας ἀναφέρειν, ἀντίτυπος, ἐννοια*, are found in them alone.

³ 1 Pet. v. 10, 11 and Heb. xiii. 20—22.

Studied in the same line of thought



The most distinctive feature however of the author's theology—the idea of Christ's priest-
 hood—was borrowed from no apostle.
 St Paul and St John developed in kindred language the conception of his *sonship*; that of his *sovereignty* is touched in this epistle with singular reserve and evident fear of misconception¹. But the author has made the subject of the *priesthood* emphatically his own. The language which Christ himself uses in reference to his sacrifice of himself does not distinctly introduce this figure of the priestly office. Though he speaks of his blood being poured out as victim for the sins of the world and of laying down his own life, this voluntary offer

¹ The emphasis laid in vii. 2 on the kingly rank of Melchizedek suggests as its necessary rhetorical antithesis an equally emphatic assertion of the royalty of the new Melchizedek priest; but the author preserves on this subject a significant and guarded silence. If the Jews were at the moment (as I believe) in actual revolt, no Jewish Christian could safely use figures of speech, which sounded treasonable to a Roman ear, and had actually procured the condemnation of Christ by a Roman governor. This silence is made the more conspicuous by the claim made for Christians in xii. 28 of the actual possession of the same spiritual sovereignty that St Peter asserts for them in 1 Pet. ii. 9.

like Je' De' k' = Angel of Righteousness?

of himself identifies him, as does also the language of St Paul's epistles, more naturally with the offerer who brought the victim to the altar than with the officiating priest. The designation of the Messiah to a heavenly priesthood was distinctly asserted in one passage of the Old Testament (Ps. cx. 4): "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"; the Messianic import of which was universally admitted by the Jews. But the apostles had not adopted this type: they had contemplated him in the kindred character of mediator advocate and intercessor, but not as priest. St John so far approached it as to recognise Christians as a kingdom of priests unto God¹: and St Peter designated them also as a royal priesthood², but neither of them applied the title to Christ himself. It was reserved for the Epistle to the Hebrews to develop the full significance of this type, and attach to the Messiah the title of priest as well as king and prophet.

But again: if the author was not Apollos, nor St Paul, nor any disciple of St Paul, who

¹ Rev. i. 6, v. 10.

² 1 Pet. ii. 9.

was he? Are we to seek his name amongst any other well known Christians, disciples of the Twelve? How few of these are in fact known to us even by name! the internal history of the church of the circumcision is almost a blank. The epistle itself suggests too that the author may have lived at home amongst his own people, devoted to pastoral work and scriptural study rather than missionary labour: being anonymous, it failed to spread abroad the knowledge of his name through the church at large in his own time; and the unique character of its style forbids our ascribing it to any otherwise known author. I see therefore little hope of our recovering now a name which was mere matter of conjecture in the second century.

But we can gather from the epistle important conclusions as to his position and the antecedent circumstances which contributed to mould his mind, as we have already about his theology. He was clearly not an apostle: his own account¹ of the evi-

¹ Heb. ii. 10.

dence on which he had received the Gospel is decisive on this head. For one distinctive mark of an apostle was a direct commission from the Lord himself: no apostle could have described his knowledge of the Lord's word as only secondhand. Nor does he write like an apostle; though apparently a minister of some recognised position in the church¹, he markedly abstains from arrogating to himself that authority which the apostolic epistles naturally assume. While their writers claim a hearing as accredited ambassadors of Christ, he bases his teaching on the authority of reason and Scripture. Even the omission of his name has not unreasonably been ascribed to his reluctance to take too much upon himself, as though he did not feel himself entitled to write in his own name.

But he belonged to the first generation of converts, who had actually heard the testimony of the Twelve, and received from their lips the history of Jesus' life. His description of his Christian

but an early convert previously trained by the Law and the Prophets.

¹ The authoritative tone of reproof or commendation which

teachers points distinctly to men who had had personal intercourse with the Lord on earth.

He was a convert, and therefore educated as a Jew: before his conversion his mind had been moulded by the study of the Old Testament. He must have studied this as a whole, and not, like the Pharisees, contented himself with a purely legal aspect of the Law alone: for the holy men of old, who had furnished in the Scriptures spiritual food for the life of the soul, had been his earlier teachers. Nor did he, like the priestly party, rest exclusively on the value of an external ritual; for the spiritual interpretation of that ritual by the Prophets had sunk deep into his mind. The Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets had each contributed in their measure to form his character. While the terrors of the Law still live in his pages, and its types furnish him with his most frequent means of expressing spiritual truth, the language of the Messianic Psalms supplies also a familiar vehicle for his thoughts; and the

he almost insensibly adopts (v. 12, vi. 9) suggests some such claim as this upon his readers.

spirit of a Hebrew prophet breathes in his writing.

We cannot however complete our survey of his Israelite education without taking into account his contact with Hel-
An educated Hellenist.
lenic society literature and philosophy. The indirect effect of these influences must have been considerable upon all members of the church; for the evangelists and principal apostles all wrote in Greek: but the author, to judge by his language, had a mind as cultivated as St Paul himself, while he had received a more distinctly Greek education. Greek was evidently the language in which he habitually thought and wrote; he had studied the Scriptures in the Septuagint version, and he was certainly more familiar with it than with the original Hebrew, for where they differ he has no hesitation in adopting the former.

Now this distinction of language implied a corresponding difference in religious
Hellenistic sentiments and literature.
sentiment and practice. Their direct contact with Hellenic civilisation produced a sensible effect on the minds of the Hellenists.

It did not always induce a spirit of tolerance, for some of the Jews of Greece and Asia Minor were as intolerant zealots for the Law as any of their brethren in Judea: but where their jealousy was not aroused against the Gentiles, the Jews of the Dispersion, like the Galileans, welcomed more readily the spiritual truths of the Gospel than those of Jerusalem. This was partly due to the inevitable decay of ceremonial observance at a distance from the temple, but partly also to the enlarged sympathies fostered by intercourse with the heathen. Their literature also exhibits the effect of that intercourse. The most remarkable of the works in which they embodied their religious thought still survive, and furnish ample illustration of the two opposite currents of feeling which prevailed among the Hellenists. If the works of Philo be compared with the books of the Apocrypha, the former exhibit strongly the tendency of Greek philosophy to undermine Hebrew faith; the narrow prejudices of an exclusive nationality present no obstacle to his system of thoroughly sceptical philosophy. The Apo-

crypha on the contrary manifests the intense earnestness with which the later Jew still clung to the faith of his fathers: the history of the religious and patriotic reaction, which under Maccabean leadership liberated Palestine from the yoke of an idolatrous king, is there recorded with the liveliest sympathy, and vivid pictures are painted of the burning zeal and heroic courage evoked by the fierce struggle. But a still nobler monument of Hellenistic thought is left us in the books of Wisdom: we can recognise in them a faith in the God of Israel as firm in its grasp as that of earlier generations, and yet combined with it that more enlightened acknowledgment of Gentile claims, and catholic spirit of sympathy with the upright of all nations, which made the Jews of the Dispersion fit heralds throughout the Roman world of the one true God, and prepared the way in the Jewish synagogue for the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

The book entitled Wisdom of Solomon, whose tone and language shows the most distinct traces of Greek culture, is

*Wisdom of
Solomon.*

as remarkable for its grand embodiment of religious thought as for the sublimity of its poetry. It is animated by faith in a personal God as vivid as any exhibited in the Pentateuch. He is set before us as the Creator, the living Governor of the world: the powers of nature are absolutely at his command, the whole animal creation, as well as man himself, are the instruments of his will. The author does not shrink from the most anthropomorphic expression of this faith; as for instance in his magnificent description of the Lord going forth to battle against the ungodly as a man of war clad in his holy armour, and wielding the weapons of his wrath¹. But more striking still is his com-

¹ Wisd. v. 16—22. With his right hand shall he cover them (the righteous) and with his arm shall he shield them. He shall take to him his jealousy for complete armour, and arm the creation for repulse of their enemies. He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate and true judgment as an helmet. He shall take holiness for an impregnable shield. Stern wrath shall he sharpen for a sword, and the world shall war with him to the uttermost against the senseless. Right aiming thunderbolts shall go their way; and from the clouds, as from a well-rounded bow, shall they leap to the mark. And hailstones full of wrath shall be cast as out of an engine of war, and the water of the sea shall rage against them, and the floods shall sweep them sternly away together.



prehensiveness of spirit, and a recognition of the moral claims of the heathen which was lacking to the earlier Israelites; we find in short exactly the change of character which was essential to the divine mission assigned to these Hellenists of becoming the precursors of Christianity. For the Almighty is no longer viewed exclusively as the God of Israel; though the Israelites are specially beloved for the fathers' sake, the *righteous* are the beloved of God, and their souls are in his hand (iii. 1). The author has evidently begun to rise to a true conception of Jehovah as God of the whole earth: the justice of his dealings with the heathen is vindicated with some care: their vices (xii. 3—6) and cruelty (xi. 7) are alleged as the occasion of his judgments; while they themselves are declared to be the objects of his mercy and love (xi. 23—xii. 2), whom he spareth that they may repent (xii. 19). The origin of evil too is pronounced to be moral, not material; not inborn, but consequent on temptation either by the devil (ii. 24), by their fleshly lusts (ii. 6—9), or their passions (ii. 10—20).

Hence the importance which he attaches to moral training, as a training not for life only but for immortality: for he regards this life as a probation for a glorious immortality: the sufferings of the upright are God's chastening for their good, and early death brings only a speedier entrance into glory (iv. 13, 14). God bestows on them spiritual help also, as well as moral training: in answer to their prayer (viii. 21) He giveth his divine wisdom, even the Spirit of God, who has been from eternity the partner of his counsels and the assessor of his throne (ix. 4—6). In the poetical impersonation of the spirit of Wisdom the Christian reader may recognise a marvellous anticipation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; which St Paul has not hesitated closely to reproduce¹ in his description

¹ Compare 1 Cor. ii. 6—16 with Wisd. ix. 9—17: "Wisdom is with thee; who knoweth thy works, and was present when thou madest the world, and knoweth what is acceptable in thy sight and right in thy commandments. O send her out of thy holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory, that being present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee. For she knoweth and understandeth all things.... For what man shall know the counsel of God, or who shall think what the will of the Lord is? For the thoughts of

of the true Christian wisdom due to the presence of the Spirit in the heart. In like manner the Epistle to the Hebrews has borrowed from the book of Wisdom the description of the pre-incarnate Son as an emanation from the eternal light¹: and another striking piece of imagery in the epistle², as well as several passages in the works of Philo, owe their origin apparently to the poetic personification in the book of Wisdom (xviii. 15, 16) of the Word of God as the destroyer of the firstborn: "Thine Almighty Word leaped forth from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a stern man of war into the midst of the land of destruction, bearing thine unfeigned command as a sharp sword; and stood and filled all things with death; and it touched the heaven, but strode upon the earth." The view taken by the epistle of God's filial training³ again exhibits a kindred spirit to the

mortal men are miserable, ...and hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon earth..., but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out? and thy counsel, who hath known except thou hast given wisdom and sent thy holy spirit from the highest?"

¹ Heb. i. 3 and Wisd. vii. 26.

² Heb. iv. 12, 13.

³ Heb. ii. 10, xii. 5—11.

book of Wisdom; but here both follow the guidance of the book of Proverbs. And though the general scope of the epistle is too exclusively directed to the personal work of Christ to allow of any close resemblance, the reader cannot fail to recognise in the two books many traces of a kindred spirit. Their style possesses one common feature in the stately language in which both authors delight; but their structure of sentences and their vocabularies are distinct, the rare words of one author being seldom identical with those of the other.


It is otherwise with the works of Philo¹: here we find the epistle borrowing the language, but not harmonising with the spirit. The two authors agree in one

Contrast between
Philo and the
epistle.

¹ Philo, the Alexandrian, belonged to the most wealthy and distinguished family of the Egyptian Jews. His most important works consist of mystical interpretations of the Biblical record of creation, of the history of the Patriarchs, and the life and institutions of Moses: all these being viewed in reference to his own theosophy without regard to their historical truth. It is difficult to decide how much of his system was original, for he is almost the only surviving exponent of Jewish Platonism. His works were widely read: the latest probably was his account of his embassy to the emperor Caligula on occasion of Egyptian disturbances, and shows him to have survived some forty years

point, viz. allegorical interpretation of Scripture, but differ in their whole tone of mind. For Philo can scarcely be called, properly speaking, a believer in Scripture, though a diligent student of the Old Testament: he was a Platonist at heart, and dealt with the religious books of the Jews with the same freedom that Plato had allowed himself in handling the traditional mythology of Greek poets. The intensity of his Jewish prejudices prompted him to exalt Moses into the prince of philosophers, and to extol his writings as the fountain of all truth. But he assumed at the same time a right to annihilate by his own arbitrary interpretations the historical truth of the Pentateuch and the obvious meaning of Moses' precepts. His exponents of Scripture were not the Hebrew prophets who preserved with reverence the ancient records of their national history, but the books of Greek philosophers. In order to reconcile the revelation of a personal God with his own mystical speculation he devised a link between God and

after the Christian Era to extreme old age, but to have written before any part of the New Testament was in existence.



man in an impalpable semipersonal idea of the Word, which was neither God nor angel nor man—a shadow which eludes every attempt to grasp it, though it forms the central figure in his theology. It may be alleged with truth that the epistle presents in its doctrine of the heavenly archetype an apparently close resemblance to this mysticism; inasmuch as it asserts the earthly worship to be a mere shadow of the spiritual truth which is inherent in it, and subordinates an earthly Moses to an ideal Christ hereafter to be revealed: yet how opposite is the spirit of this creed, which imparts a higher and holier meaning to things outward and transitory by reason of the spiritual truth which they enshrine, to the mysticism which explains away the historical truth of the Old Testament in order to replace it by a speculative philosophy! The epistle, on the contrary, accepts the letter of the Law with the utmost reverence as the word of God, regards the Psalmist and the Prophets as inspired interpreters of that Law, uses the older revelation as a ladder to climb to the higher spiritual truth revealed in Christianity, and

finally fixes the faith on the real living person of the Son of God, and preaches in his name forgiveness of sins and holiness of life, faith and peace, to a redeemed people. The epistle moreover manifests no such sympathy with the particular doctrine suggested in Philo of the personality of the Word as we find in St John; and the religious mysticism cherished by Philo and by Jewish devotional brotherhoods like the Essenes in Syria and the Therapeutae in Egypt found no place in the mind of its author.

He has however one common element with Philo: both delight in the typical interpretation of Scripture, as pregnant with latent germs of spiritual truth. The eye of both perceives in such narratives as the history of Abraham, of the patriarchs and of Melchisedek, the mediation of Moses, the consecration of Aaron, the institution of the Melchisedek priesthood, a wealth of spiritual images: and Philo's attributes of the ideal Word furnish striking parallels to the attributes of the Son of God. Hence arises a conspicuous coincidence in their language; and the works of Philo supply

Coincidence with Philo.

a fertile field for illustration of the epistle. There is however the utmost practical difference in their use of allegory: the epistle often finds an allegorical meaning in history, as St Paul does in the narrative of Sarah and Hagar¹ and in the veil worn by Moses²: but neither of these writers applies it like Philo to the destruction of history or pushes it into the same region of fanciful interpretation.

The author's life must be gathered from such hints as are furnished by the epistle. He was apparently an original mem-
Author's life after his conversion.
 ber of the Hebrew church to which he wrote, and had continued resident among them from the time of his embracing Christianity. For in referring to their conversion he identifies himself with his readers as one of themselves³: he recalls with the distinctness of an eye-witness the persecutions of that season⁴, and their behaviour under them: he upbraids them with the authority of a recognised minister for their lack of spiritual progress in the intervening years⁵: he

¹ Gal. iv. 24—31.

² 2 Cor. iii. 7—16.

³ Heb. ii. 3.

⁴ Heb. x. 32—34.

⁵ Heb. v. 11, 12.



bears testimony from personal knowledge, as it appears, to their works of love in past as well as present time¹: he manifests a personal acquaintance with the lives of their rulers², and an intimate understanding of the special dangers besetting their church³: he alludes to his present position and circumstances as naturally well known to them without the necessity for any statement from him⁴: he pleads his conscientious life as an acknowledged claim upon their sympathy⁵: he speaks hopefully of his speedy return to them as a restoration to his home⁶.

But if he was himself a member of the church he was addressing, it becomes doubly ^{Church of the Hebrews.} evident, both from the analysis we have made of his opinions, and from the nature of the letter itself, that it was not addressed to any of the mixed churches of the West, but to one of those Eastern churches gathered by the Twelve and their immediate disciples mainly out of Jewish proselytes. And the very name

¹ Heb. vi. 9, 10.

² Heb. xiii. 7.

³ Heb. xiii. 9.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 23.

⁵ Heb. xiii. 18.

⁶ Heb. xiii. 19.


of the epistle forces upon us the same conclusion: we know that the common designation by which it was known to the church as early as the second century was *the Epistle to the Hebrews*: this title was an enigma to the church of Alexandria, as represented by Clement and Origen; but it was the only one, and they laboured, not very successfully, to reconcile it with the Greek language in which it was written: the same name prevailed at Rome and Carthage as in the East. This title was in short the universal tradition of the Church, the one indisputable fragment we possess of primitive tradition concerning the epistle. What then does it mean? The name of Hebrews did not extend like that of Jews to all who shared the Jewish creed; it was not applied indiscriminately to the Jews of the Dispersion; and for this reason that it implied primarily the use of the Hebrew language. Strictly speaking, none were called Hebrews but those who spoke Hebrew: the two sections of the church of Jerusalem for instance were classed as Hellenists or as Hebrews¹ ac-

¹ Acts vi. 1.

cordingly as they spoke Greek or Hebrew. But in a country where two languages were in daily use, and the mass of the people were compelled to employ both for purposes of ordinary life, mere difference of language did not suffice to form a definite line of demarcation; habits sentiments and associations also contributed in no small degree to classify society. The whole patriotic party prided themselves on the name of Hebrew as a national badge of distinction from the Gentiles. Accordingly the name was naturally affected by all Jews throughout the Hebrew-speaking locality, though many of them spoke Greek more or less habitually as their daily language: and became a distinctive designation of the Jews in the region in and around Palestine, where the difference of language intensified the struggle of creed race and party: whereas the Jews of Rome Greece and Asia Minor had no such designation. This use of the term, as descriptive of a locality, is its most natural interpretation when applied to Christians and employed as the title of a letter: and this explains the apparent paradox that the most

unquestionably Greek epistle of the New Testament was addressed to Hebrews. For the term, if once applied as a local designation, would probably embrace all the group of Christian churches planted round the church of Jerusalem in Syria as well as Palestine: the intercourse of the Christians of Caesarea and Antioch with Jerusalem was constant and intimate: they were near enough to attend the Jewish festivals and take frequent part in the temple sacrifices: and the same sympathies, which prompted St Paul to boast himself a Hebrew, would lead the Syrian churches to glory in the title. Still Greek was habitually spoken there: and though both languages existed side by side throughout the Roman province of Syria, Greek doubtless prevailed over Hebrew in many cities at a distance from Jerusalem, and became predominant even in Jewish colonies outside the limits of Palestine: an epistle in Hebrew to some of the Hebrew Christians in Syria would have been as much out of place as a Greek epistle to the church of Jerusalem.

The church of Jerusalem itself is excluded from consideration by its history still more




decisively than by its language. At no time of its brief existence can that church ^{Not identical with the church of Jerusalem,} have been without living witnesses of the Lord who had heard the Gospel from his own lips, whereas we are told that these Hebrews had received it on the strength of others' report¹. The martyrdom in three successive persecutions of its most distinguished members Stephen, James the son of Zebedee, and James the brother of our Lord, is altogether at variance with the historical allusions in the Epistle; which imply that in this Hebrew church no actual martyrdom had taken place²; and that, though they had for a time after their conversion been subject to imprisonment, loss of property, and personal maltreatment, the church had subsequently enjoyed continual peace³.

But the recorded history of other churches in Palestine and Syria does corre- ^{but with one of the Syrian churches.} spond exactly with this account. They were founded after the death of Stephen by the scattered members of the church of

¹ Heb. ii. 3.² Heb. xii. 4.³ Heb. x. 32—34.

Jerusalem, most of whom had probably heard the personal teaching of the Lord: and they were near enough to Jerusalem to suffer from Jewish animosity; for the mission of Saul to Damascus is an instructive example of the local persecutions organised against infant churches within reach. Their vicinity to Jerusalem materially affected their religious life and habits: the participation of many members of Greek or Roman churches in the Mosaic sacrifices was of necessity an isolated event in a lifetime: St Paul's own visits to Jerusalem for instance after his departure from Antioch were separated by intervals of many years. On the contrary annual attendance at some of the three great festivals was quite possible to devout Syrian Christians, and probably their regular practice. There was no opportunity therefore amongst them for the same gradual decay of Judaism which occurred in the Pauline churches. St Paul himself was driven to struggle hard in the church of Antioch for the freedom of Gentile Christianity against the current of Judaism which flowed thither from Jerusalem; and after his departure, when



the Syrian churches became the province of the Twelve, even Gentile converts must have been for a time leavened with Judaism, if they did not become actual proselytes. To one of these great Syrian cities, perhaps to Antioch itself, I conceive the Epistle to have been addressed; for there alone existed flourishing Christian churches, founded by the earliest missionaries of the Gospel, animated with Jewish sympathies, full of interest in the Mosaic worship, and glorying in the name of Hebrews; who nevertheless spoke the Greek language, used the Greek version of the Scriptures and numbered amongst their members converts who had, like the Author, combined the highest advantages of Greek culture with careful study of the Old Testament and especially of the sacrificial law.

We now proceed to examine what motives can have induced a Hebrew Christian so deeply imbued as the Author with the spirit of the Old Testament, and full of reverence for its letter, to adopt a purely spiritual interpretation of the Law which necessitated an entire abandonment of

Devotion of Hebrew Christians to the Law.



the Mosaic worship and sacrifices. We know from the history of St Paul, how strong was the Judaistic spirit even in churches like those of Rome¹ and Ephesus² where we might have expected to find Gentile Christianity preponderate. Though the apostle triumphed on the main issue and secured the freedom of Gentile converts from circumcision, the letters of the imprisonment and his latest utterance to his son Timothy reveal to us often a lonely man, maintaining single-handed, though with unabated faith and assurance of final triumph, an unequal struggle against the combined forces of Scriptural authority, established tradition, and outward formalism arrayed against him. How firmly then must the literal interpretation of the Law have prevailed in the churches of the Circumcision! Like the Author they found for the most part no antagonism between Christianity and Judaism. The latest glimpse we catch of them in Scripture on the occasion of St Paul's

¹ This is evident not only from the Epistle to the Romans, but from St Paul's subsequent letters during his imprisonment. Compare Col. iv. 11.

² 2 Tim. i. 15.

last recorded visit to Jerusalem brings out in strong relief their unabated zeal for the law of their fathers and their active participation in the temple worship¹. Nor do we know of any event in the few years which elapsed before the Jewish rebellion calculated to change these sentiments. There were outbreaks of Jewish fanaticism, and in one of these James the Just perished as Stephen had before; but there is no record of continuous and organised persecution. Nor was momentary persecution likely to interrupt the general intercourse of the Hebrew Christians with Jerusalem, or their habitual resort to the temple courts as devout and zealous worshippers. The evidence of history concurs with reasonable probability in suggesting that the abandonment of the Mosaic system was a reluctant concession of the Hebrew Christians to external events in which they were constrained to recognise the hand of God, and not due to their own internal convictions.

For the Jewish war revealed the utter incompatibility of Christian principles with the spirit

¹ Act. xxi. 20—24.

of Judaism when roused to decisive action.

Consequences of the Jewish rebellion. The Hebrew Christians, though prepared to suffer martyrdom for their faith, were forbidden to draw the sword in its defence. The principle of loyal submission to a heathen government was consecrated for them by the example as well as the precepts of Christ and his apostles. Had the Jews therefore raised the standard of rebellion simply in defence of their right to worship God freely, we might still expect the Christians to have stood aloof from the contest. Loyalty to the government would have kept them neutral in spite of their religious sympathy with the Jews. But the revolt was not purely religious ; it was also national and patriotic, and assumed from its very commencement an internecine character, Jew and Gentile being arrayed against each other in a struggle of mutual extermination. Now the Christian communities were bound by the closest ties of Christian brotherhood to fellow Christians who had no sympathies with Judaism : they were essentially a peace party in a struggle between Jew and Greek, because they comprehended



both parties within their ranks, and embraced them in their hearts. But the violence of the Jewish zealots rendered the very existence of a peace party impracticable at that period in Judea: neutrality was treated as a crime, and its adherents fell victims to the rival massacres of Jew and Greek alike¹. The abandonment of the Jewish ritual was thus forced by circumstances upon the Hebrew Christians: those of Jerusalem fled to Pella: those who escaped massacre in the other cities of Palestine must have found refuge in the neighbouring Christian communities, the Hellenists naturally for the most part in Syria: for in Antioch the firmness of the Roman governors maintained after a time a precarious peace between the rival factions²: and in some other cities, particularly Sidon, Apamea and Gerasa, Josephus expressly records the protection afforded to peaceful Jews³; in which category the Jewish Christians undoubtedly were classed.

¹ Jos. *B.* *Ƴ.* II. § 18. 1—5.


² Jos. *B.* *Ƴ.* VII. § 3. 3, § 5. 2.

³ Jos. *B.* *Ƴ.* II. § 18. 5.

The very nature of the Epistle therefore forces on me the conclusion that the Jewish war had reached an advanced stage before its composition. Its tone implies, not a temporary suspension of Christian communion with the Mosaic worship, but a settled conviction of its final doom. The establishment of the Jerusalem Christians in their new home at Pella, and the destruction by massacre or flight of the other Palestine churches, must have already come to pass: and now the Syrian churches were watching in fear and heaviness of heart the later scenes of the awful tragedy. I conceive that the fatal year, A.D. 70, had arrived, and the Roman armies had gathered round Jerusalem: if the daily sacrifice had not already ceased, the siege had at all events begun: for until Jerusalem was "compassed with armies" no Hebrew Christian would have ventured to address to his Hebrew brethren so unsparing a condemnation of the national religion. But the actual end had not yet arrived: the day of the Lord was still only at hand, though visibly approaching: the doom of the holy city and

temple however, foretold so distinctly by their Lord, could not now be long delayed: and already the judgment of the living God was casting its awful shadow over the spirits of Hebrew Christians¹. The approaching end of the sanctuary is the thought which underlies the whole Epistle, and furnishes the only satisfactory key to its contents. After that crisis had passed and the temple worship had receded into a forgotten past, the language might have sounded unreal and exaggerated: but during the horrors which preceded and accompanied the last siege of Jerusalem it was a natural echo of that terrible revelation of judgment on a condemned church. The Jewish Christians were passing through a dark and anxious hour: the foundations of their old faith were crumbling fast beneath their feet: what was to be their religious practice in future? an irresistible force was driving them to seek a solution of the problem: the question was terribly urgent, and the Author throws into his answer a corresponding earnestness.

¹ Heb. x. 26—31.




The more carefully we examine the contents of the Epistle, the more forcibly are we driven to resort to the contemporary fall of Judaism as the only adequate explanation of its motive. For after exalting the eternal grandeur of God's final revelation it proceeds to a studied depreciation of the Mosaic covenant as imperfect and temporary. The angelic mediators of the Law, its lawgiver priesthood covenant and sanctuary, its atonement and sin offering, with the many sacrifices ordained under the Levitical system, are systematically disparaged in several chapters of continuous argument as inferior inadequate and transitory. Christ is exhibited in their place as the end of the Law, his priesthood as supplanting that of Aaron, the need for sacrifice as done away by his final sacrifice, the material sanctuary as superseded by the spiritual, the old covenant as replaced by the new. And yet the divine character of the older revelation is fully admitted: moreover there appears no trace of that rivalry between the Law and the Gospel which breathes through the Epistles of St Paul, no

Motive and
contents of the
Epistle.

apprehension of a relapse into Judaism, no suggestion of internal dissensions, rival parties, or revival of Jewish prejudices. The dangers apprehended by the Author are unbelief, faint-heartedness, moral cowardice, spiritual stagnation, open apostasy, practical heathenism, novel superstitions. These temptations call forth his earnest warnings as actual perils of the church, while the influence of Judaism is treated as practically dead: his fear is that Christian faith, largely bound up as it was with Jewish faith and practice, may perish with it through the disheartening effect of its terrible overthrow: and so the end of the Christian become so much worse than the end of the Jew as his privileges were higher and his responsibilities greater. It is impossible to regard the Epistle as a mere exposition of doctrine; its fervent appeals, its deep pathos, its pervading gloom, its vivid pictures of judgment and vengeance all forbid this: the argument is continually interrupted to impress solemn warnings on the reader; the vital importance of the present crisis is pressed home, and the fearful consequences of Israel's past

unbelief are dwelt upon as a lesson for this generation : the Author points to the visible tokens of the approaching day of wrath, he paints in the darkest colours the terrible vengeance of the Lord. Finally the earthquakes and fire, before which the panicstricken congregation shrank at Sinai, are compared with the great convulsion predicted by the prophet Haggai : that prophecy is interpreted, with obvious reference to our Lord's great prophecy of the siege and desolation of Jerusalem, as foreshadowing the final removal of the material kingdom of God that the spiritual and eternal only may remain. The terror occasioned by this final shock is described as present, the consuming fire as actually burning, in language corresponding to the trembling amazement with which the Hebrew Christians must have beheld the utter ruin by fire and sword of all they counted most sacred on earth. Here and there the thought of the besieged city takes definite shape in figures of speech ; the foundations of the earthly Jerusalem, yielding to the shocks of the Roman engines of war, suggest the hope of the heavenly



city "which hath the foundations¹:" the removal of the city of their fathers calls forth the warning that "we have not here an abiding city²." The whole mind of the Author is engrossed with preparation of the Hebrew Christians for the inevitable change; old things are passing away, and his paramount object is to reconcile them to the loss by impressing on them how much richer and more glorious is their new inheritance in Christ. But why, it may be said, is there no open reference to passing events? the necessity for extreme caution in the case of Hebrew Christians is quite sufficient to explain this silence: the Hebrew Christians were Jews living in the immediate neighbourhood of a great national rebellion; and their words and actions were watched with the utmost vigilance by jealous enemies; it was therefore of vital importance to suppress every distinct expression of sympathy with rebels.

It remains to examine how far the general indications of date scattered through the Epistle correspond to these con-

Further indications of date.


¹ Heb. xi. 10.

² Heb. xiii. 14.

clusions. First of all, the language employed in reference to the Levitical system forbids the adoption of a much later date: we cannot indeed lay stress on the Author's use of the present tense in speaking of the ritual, for this might be explained by his habit of speaking of all things which exist in the pages of Scripture as actually existing; but his whole argument on the subject implies that the sacrificial system was still a living reality to him and his readers; which it must have ceased to be, had many years elapsed since the destruction of the temple. Once however the past time is used with reference to the ordinances of the sanctuary¹: and this is consistent with the actual state of things produced by the siege. The temple still existed, and the sacrifices continued for a time, but Christian access to it had been finally cut off, and the Christian church had learnt to look upon Jerusalem as already a doomed city. Again, the Epistle was written within the lifetime of the original converts; the circumstances of their conversion are recalled to memory², but only as

¹ Heb. ix. 1.

² Heb. x. 32.



an event of past history and not of recent experience: the length of time which had since elapsed is spoken of as an indefinite interval of years¹. The personal testimony of the apostles is remembered², but the cessation of their authority in the church seems clearly implied: there is no trace of their jurisdiction nor recognition of their living guidance, where we might reasonably expect to find it, if they had still retained the charge of the Hebrew church: the rulers of the church are described by the same vague term which Clement of Rome employs in writing to the church of Corinth³; and the respect due to the position life and doctrine of these local leaders is presented as the safeguard against dangerous heresies: now the Hebrew church was not left without apostolic guidance at all events before the death of St James⁴ and the departure of St John⁵. The violence of those

¹ Heb. v. 12.

² Heb. ii. 3.

³ Heb. xiii. 7—17.

⁴ He was stoned to death in Jerusalem about A.D. 63.

⁵ If the Apocalypse was written during the Jewish war, as there seems some reason to conclude, St John must have removed to Asia Minor and assumed the direction of the seven churches



troubled times accounts sufficiently for the temporary absence of regular church government in the next few years.

The relation subsisting between the church and Judaism indicates, even if we reject the explanation of it already given, that the later period of the apostolic age had been reached. For the rival claims of the Law and the Gospel in the domain of Christian life had adjusted themselves. Circumcision, though still probably universal in the Hebrew church, is not so much as mentioned : the Mosaic sacrifices are contemplated in a purely typical aspect : the observance of days has passed so completely out of the region of controversy that the term *sabbath rest* is employed in a purely spiritual sense : the perils of the church lie no longer in the zealous observance of the Law, but in the decay of zeal and the failure to grasp spiritual realities. On the other hand many considerations combine to

before that period. He cannot have remained in Jerusalem itself during the events of A.D. 63 and the Martyrdom of St James ; but he may possibly have continued in those parts as late as the outbreak of the rebellion in A.D. 66.



preclude a much later date: the postapostolic corruptions of Christian truth by Ebionite and Gnostic heresy had not yet reached the stage of complete development: the early admission of the Epistle to an equal rank with the apostolic Epistles, the frequent citation of it by Clement of Rome as a work of acknowledged authority and the recognition of it by the earliest fathers of the Alexandrian church, compel us to associate it with the apostolic rather than with any subsequent age.


The salutation at the close of the Epistle proves it to have been written from Italy¹; unless in defiance of all the previous arguments it be supposed to be addressed to Italy. The author was at the time subject to involuntary detention, probably at

Circumstances
and position of
the Author.

¹ Heb. xiii. 24. The words of the salutation equally admit of being interpreted as sent from Italian residents in some foreign city, and those who identify the Hebrew church with the Roman so interpret it: but this interpretation independently of other objections to it runs counter to the spirit of an apostolic epistle. The salutation would more naturally be sent from the whole Christian church in Italy, than from Italian Christians as a separate body: the bond of Christian fellowship united whole churches together; not separate sections only.

Rome¹. The occasion is not stated, being already known to the church; but the language of the Epistle implies that it was of a public nature, and that Timothy had been associated with him as a fellow-prisoner on behalf either of that Hebrew church or of some sister church. They were not however awaiting trial; Timothy had been already set at liberty; and the Author was looking forward to his own speedy return home, perhaps in company with Timothy. The circumstances of the Jewish war offer a not improbable explanation of these facts. After Vespasian's advance to Jericho in A.D. 68 operations were suspended for more than a year by events in Italy. Vespasian is likely, according to the ordinary Roman policy, to have carried with him to Italy some of the leading Syrian Jews as hostages for the fidelity of their communities, and amidst these he would natu-

¹ The mention of Italy suggests Rome as the Author's place of abode: still more conclusive is the detention (xiii. 19, 23) of the Author and Timothy. Hebrew Christians might well be detained at Rome, as the central seat of administration and justice, but their detention in any other Italian city appears improbable.



rally include Jewish Christians: their release would not take place till after the complete investment of Jerusalem. We should not have expected from their antecedents to find Timothy associated with the Author as a fellow-minister in an adjoining sphere of labour, but Jewish and Gentile Christianity had originally met in Syria; it was common ground to St Peter and St Paul, and might naturally continue a meeting-place for their disciples. Nor was any place after the Pauline churches so likely to engage the attention of Timothy.

The tidings which reached the Author during the enforced leisure of his Roman sojourn, that Jerusalem was perishing by famine slaughter and fire, drew from him this solemn appeal to the Hebrew Christians to place their trust no more in Moses or in earthly priests, in the covenant of Sinai or an earthly sanctuary, but in the Son, the eternal high priest, who has opened the way into the heavenly sanctuary for God's redeemed. It was a word in season, for the fate of the Hebrew churches was then hanging in the balance.

Importance of
the crisis.

The destruction of the temple necessitated a final choice on their part, whether they would fling aside the national traditions which divided them from Gentile Christianity, and frankly accept the spiritual nature of Christ's religion in all its fulness, or crystallise by slow degrees into those narrow heretical sects, which long survived, especially in the neighbourhood of Palestine, as a relic of Jewish Christianity. The Epistle no doubt contributed largely to determine the destiny of the nobler section, and induced the majority to throw in their lot with their brethren from among the Gentiles. Perhaps the extent of its circulation amongst Hebrew Christians in general helped to obliterate the name of the particular church to which it was addressed : and so the name of the Author perished also ; leaving only the title of the Epistle to the Hebrews, under which it was known and valued by the Christian Church at large.

The Epistle contains indications, more or less distinct, of heretical tendencies akin to Essene doctrine prevailing in the Hebrew church. The open-

Heretical tendencies in the church;

1. Angelic mediators,



ing argument suggests the existence there of a disposition to superstitious veneration of angels against which it is aimed. The Hebrew Scriptures recognised their agency in the lives of the Patriarchs and the history of Israel; the early church agreed with the Epistle in acknowledging their mediation in the giving of the Law¹. But the later Jews, not content with this recognition of their agency, had developed from their contact with Oriental mysticism a superstitious veneration for the heavenly hierarchy of angelic mediators, far exceeding Scripture warrant. The study of angels is named by Josephus as a prominent feature in the secret books of the Jewish Essenes², and the national belief in an expected heavenly mediator must have universally encouraged it. When therefore we find the Epistle closely following in its Christology the lines traced by St Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians³, we may reasonably conjecture that the Author found it necessary to

¹ Compare Heb. ii. 2, with Act. vii. 38, 53 and Gal. iii. 19.

² Jos. B. J. II. § 8. 7.

³ Compare Heb. i. 2—ii. 16 with Col. i. 15—19.

combat in the Hebrew church similar errors to those which prevailed in the Colossian church. When we find the superiority of the Son to angels argued by an elaborate contrast between his eternal inheritance, preincarnate glory, creative and administrative power over the universe, and their subordinate ministrations; and again the mediatorial perfection of his complete humanity noted in opposition to the diverse nature of men and angels, we conclude that rival theories of angelic mediation were present to the writer's mind. There is however no trace in this Epistle, as in that to the Colossians, of the cosmical speculation for whose development Phrygia and Ionia were so fertile a soil, and which was associated with those views in Asia Minor.

The departure of the Essenes from the spirit
a. Depreciation
of marriage, of the ancient Hebrews was still
more marked in their depreciation
of marriage, which had received in Scripture
such abundant honour. The more rigid sects
enforced entire celibacy amidst other ascetic
rules, like those false teachers whom St Paul



denounced in the Pastoral Epistles, as “forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats¹.” Others however were content to tolerate marriage as a necessity², but disparaged it as a social union, and sought their real society in the brotherhood of a male community. The emphatic assertion in Heb. xiii. 4 of the dignity of marriage seems to be directed against a disparagement of this kind by some section of the Hebrew church. ✓

But the particular doctrine of the Essenes, which strikes the reader of Josephus as most repugnant to the Mosaic law, was the new system of priesthood and sacrifice which they introduced into daily life. Though they still revered the temple at Jerusalem and presented there some kind of dedicated offerings³, they practically broke away altogether from its sacrificial system and substituted for it new ordinances of their own, according to which the daily meal became a sacrifice⁴, and the president of the community

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

² Jos. B. J. II. § 8. 13.

³ Jos. Ant. XVIII. § 1. 3.

⁴ Jos. B. J. II. § 8. 5—8.

took the place of the Levitical priest. Every meal was strictly prepared and blessed by him: at a fixed hour all full members of the community, after performing regular ablutions, arrayed themselves in white, and entered the refectory, which they regarded as a sanctuary: they joined in set forms of prayer, and partook together of the prescribed food: even the probationers of their own brotherhood, though they went through the same course of ablutions, were excluded from these common meals, which were the highest privilege of the initiated: they were also bound by the most solemn oaths to touch no other food of human preparation, and so sacred did they account these oaths that expelled members of the community preferred death to partaking of unconsecrated food. Such a system amounted to the introduction of a new kind of sacrifice, superseding the Mosaic, and as alien from the Jewish as from the Christian idea of sacrifice. Now the attentive reader of Heb. xiii. 9—12 may find in the novel doctrines there denounced a close resemblance to this Essene principle of sacrificial meals, and



gather thence the conclusion that similar practices must have been creeping into the Hebrew church. They were equally repugnant to the true Israelite and to the Christian. The Author combines the two characters in his argument against them. Against their novelty he appeals (*v.* 8) to the unchangeable nature of God's truth in Christ: he denounces (*v.* 9) their foreign origin as alien to the spirit of Israelite tradition: while in opposition to them he maintains the spiritual and eternal truth of the sacrificial doctrine dimly revealed in the types of the old Mosaic law and now made manifest in Christ. He pronounces at the same time a brief, but decisive, condemnation on the sect from which these novel ideas had emanated. They had failed in practice to elevate the life; while they must naturally have tended to degrade the religion of these communities into a formal system of rigid asceticism. No details are given of their habits; possibly the development of their principles varied in different localities; it presented probably a different aspect in the cities of Syria from that which Josephus

saw in the Eastern wilderness. But the principles assailed are those of the Essenes, whose newly invented sacrificial system was the more formidable, because it did not depend like the Mosaic institutions on the local temple at Jerusalem, nor was likely to suffer by its destruction, but asserted an universal mastery, wherever it became established, over the members' daily life. And we may recognise in this unfavourable estimate a correct judgment of the danger which was then beginning to beset the Hebrew church from alliance with the Jewish Essenes, and which subsequently developed into strange forms of heresy.



SACRIFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE original connexion of Christianity with Judaism is an acknowledged fact established on the solid basis of historical evidence. The one religion sprang out of the other: its founder was born and educated as a Jew: his life and ministry were passed entirely amidst Jews: all the apostles, all the earliest converts, all the writers of the New Testament (except perhaps St Luke) were Jews; a generation of Christians passed away before any definite separation had been effected between the two religions: and to this generation we are indebted for the Scriptures which form the foundation of our faith. The New Testament, though rejected by the majority of the Jewish nation, was almost as completely the work of Jews as the Old. The church of

Historical connexion of Christianity with Judaism.


Christ besides adopting the existing canon of Jewish Scripture as a whole also based the new fabric of Christian faith on the authority of Christian writers, who claimed to be still orthodox Jews: for the Apostles did not cease to be Jews because they became Christians. Modern theology does not always take sufficient account of the close connexion: but it is an admitted fact that the authoritative standards which determine Christian doctrine were written by Jews, who had grown up to manhood, before they came in contact with Christ at all, under the teaching and influence of the synagogue, who continued afterwards to participate in the worship of the Temple, and protested to the last their unshaken fidelity to the national religion, while preaching and writing in the name of Christ. Absolute as was their acceptance of his teaching, and their surrender of their spirits to the guidance of his Spirit, the first generation of Christians on their own testimony still continued Jews. They did not repudiate the religious education by which God had prepared their minds for the reception of Chris-



tianity; on the contrary they claimed to be more faithful interpreters of Moses than their adversaries; and in their teaching resorted habitually to such arguments and language as fellow Israelites would most readily understand and accept. It is therefore impossible to enter into the full meaning of their expressions or thoroughly to understand their phraseology without a careful study of this Jewish element, to which God's providence assigned so important a part in moulding the first utterances of Christianity. It was not God's appointment that the Apostles should be selected from a nation that knew not God: their people had received the highest religious education in the world; and they themselves had been devout students of its authorised Scripture; their Master too based his teaching on that Scripture: both he and they employed the Jewish synagogue as the earliest Christian pulpit. Instead of annihilating the vital force of Israelite life he deliberately threw himself into its full current, that he might purify its religious thought, regenerate its principles, and reform its practice. For his object was not

the destruction of the old religion, but its recreation by the invigorating power of a new life. He retained therefore its entire fabric, though transforming it by the quickening power of the new spirit which he infused into it.

He did not however enlist in his service its Independence of Christianity. authorised teachers, or address himself to their sympathies: on the contrary he provoked their deadly hostility; and this hostility was directed quite as much against his principles as against his person. The Jewish rulers condemned the apostles as decisively as they had their Master: and sought the life of Stephen and Paul with the same bitter rancour that they had exhibited against Christ himself. Whether we turn to the Gospel narrative or to the record of the early church, the verdict of history refutes as conclusively as that of theology the shallow taunt that Christianity was originally a mere Jewish sect. The two religions can no more be identified than Lutheranism is to be identified with Roman Catholicism, because the reformer sprang up in the bosom of the Roman Catholic church. For the independence and originality



of the reform effected by our Lord gave it at once the character of a new religion, essentially distinct from the genius of Judaism; and its antagonism to the old became apparent from the opening of Christ's ministry. Ancient Judaism in spite of the truth purity and grandeur of its worship of Jehovah was essentially local and national in virtue of its material sacrifices and local sanctuary. The subsequent destruction of its local sanctuary modified its character and thereby permitted its indefinite expansion, but at the same time entailed the loss of one of its noblest elements, which was inseparable from the existence of a local sanctuary. For the suspension of the law of sacrifice has reduced its worship to a maimed system of legal observance and formal service: the ritual which contributed so largely to prophetic inspiration and prompted some of its noblest spiritual teaching is now but a remembrance of the past and a dream of the future. The precious germs of spiritual life, whose vitality depended on the maintenance of sacrifice, perished with the fall of the temple. Christianity on the contrary de-

clared itself from the first an universal religion designed for all nations as well as all classes: it struggled from the beginning to free itself from the bondage of outward observance and local sanctity because it had a message to address to the whole human race: it claimed a mission to the whole world, and professed aloud its fitness to supply the need of every human spirit and to minister to every human want. Its Jewish teachers were forced in spite of themselves to open the doors as widely to the Gentile world as to the Jews themselves, to receive them as equal brethren in the faith, and break one by one every fetter of local ritual and national prejudice. They were driven to this universality by the force of Christ's own teaching, which had completely regenerated Judaism, and while adopting its essential principles had at the same time transformed their character by the quickening power of a new life.

The recognition of these two elements, Jewish education and Christian spirit, is essential to the right interpretation of New Testament language: for though


Adoption by apostolic writers of sacrificial language.



the doctrine conveyed was Christian, the language was addressed by Israelites to Israelites for the most part; and this phraseology had acquired a definite meaning in their minds, founded on the teaching of the Synagogue and the study of the Old Testament, before they had yet learned Christ. Furthermore, when it is remembered that most of them after embracing the Christian religion still continued zealous worshippers in the temple courts and partakers of the sacrifices, it is obvious that they retained the current religious meaning of sacrificial terms which prevailed among their Jewish brethren, though they adapted them to the expression of Christian truth. And the Israelite creed had itself risen above the mere material conception of sacrifice. The spiritual interpretation of its terms was as much a part of their Jewish inheritance as the outward ritual: a long line of priests and prophets had breathed into that ritual a spiritual meaning: mysterious gleams of light had broken forth long ago from type and prophecy to awaken the national hope of a redeemer and excite the aspirations of the

holier Israelites after a closer communion with God. The natural symbolism with which the ancient sacrificial system of Israel was instinct, rendered it originally in a high degree suggestive of spiritual interpretation: and by idealising its various elements, the prophets had by degrees created, and had transmitted to the apostles, a body of typical language capable of expressing the most sublime mysteries of spiritual truth. When therefore the apostles were struggling to grasp distinctly for themselves, and to embody in language, the full conception of all that Christ had become to them, these stores of spiritual knowledge which they inherited from their old faith became most valuable to them; they availed themselves freely of the wealth of spiritual imagery treasured up in the typical language of sacrifice, and bequeathed to them by the inspired eloquence of the Psalmist and the evangelical prophets, in order that the new faith might by its aid obtain a readier entrance into the minds, and penetrate deeper into the hearts, of their converts.

The cessation of material sacrifices through-



out the Christian world has rendered this symbolism obscure to us. In studying a book like the Epistle to the Hebrews ^{Sacrificial language alien to modern thought.} which treats of the Mosaic sacrifices as an existing reality we cannot help feeling occasionally how foreign to our ideas is the train of thought along which the author naturally travels. In one passage for instance he argues the spiritual efficacy of the blood of Christ from the ceremonial efficacy of the blood of bulls and goats to produce cleanness of the flesh¹. If, he asserts, we believe the second, we must a fortiori be willing to believe the first. But this ceremonial efficacy of blood to cleanse the flesh from pollution forms no part of our faith. As Christians we may accept his conclusion, and believe in the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. But his argument carries in itself no conviction to our minds; it rather introduces a fresh difficulty into our thoughts. Until we have studied the Jewish law of sacrifice we are left in doubt what kind of virtue the author is ascribing to the blood of Christ, whether he viewed it like the sin

¹ Heb. ix. 13, 14.



offering as instrumental for procuring God's forgiveness, or claimed for it a cleansing virtue to purify the corrupt heart akin to the water of purification. But it was otherwise with the Israelite: the efficacy of blood was one of the most natural and familiar articles of his creed; and he grasped at once almost unconsciously the full meaning of the type.

The early Christians did not however become slaves to the types which they employed: nor did they narrow the Christian revelation into a mere reproduction of Jewish types: they used these freely as illustrations of Gospel truth, but they did not sacrifice the independence of the truth itself in order to conform it to the illustration. Sacrifice had suggested many different means of bringing man near to God, such for instance as atonement, purification, consecration, sanctification, a new covenant, blood of sprinkling. All these were now embodied to them in the one person of Jesus Christ: in him they found at once forgiveness, cleansing, deliverance from the bondage of sin, new life and power to serve

The thought embodied distinctly Christian.

God, assurance of present strength and future glory. The life of Christ embraced all, and more than all, the benefits proffered by sacrifice. Whatever it had dimly foreshadowed, Christ fully realised. Christian theology then was essentially a new fabric, though the apostles gathered many stones from the old Israelite buildings to fit into this fabric. Hitherto many of these had existed only as isolated or imperfect fragments, but the life and teaching of Christ furnished a key for their combination in the harmony of a glorious whole. The revelation of the ideal sacrifice reflected back a flood of light on material rites whose typical meaning had been hitherto obscure for want of the interpretation which Christ alone could supply. Later systems of Christian theology are apt, because they are systems, to fasten in pursuit of logical simplicity on a single ritual and fix the eye on that alone, as if it sufficed by itself to exhibit the fulness of God's love in Christ. One school views the death of Christ exclusively as a sin offering for atonement, another as a paschal feast whereby food and life are ministered to the

children of God. But the New Testament resorts to the utmost variety of types to express the multiplied benefits of the one great Christian sacrifice. For Christ was himself the ideal anti-type, the one centre in whom all antecedent types and prophecies found their fulfilment. The full development of this doctrine was of necessity reserved for the teaching of the Spirit after the resurrection; but Jesus himself gave the impulse to it, and prepared the way for it during his later ministry by appropriating to himself the several types of sacrifice; in the institution of the Lord's Supper in particular he combined those of the sin offering, the Paschal lamb, and the blood of the Covenant. The vital elements of spiritual truth which had been hitherto preserved in the law of sacrifice were by this means gradually dissociated from material rites before the time arrived for their final abolition, and incorporated with the new life of the Church. During the generation of Christian believers, which retained the practice of the Mosaic sacrifices, Christian ordinances steadily replaced them in the hearts

of the early converts; the sacramental bread insensibly became what the flesh of the victim had been hitherto; the sacramental wine took by degrees the place of the outpoured blood; and faith in the cleansing and quickening virtue of blood was transferred to the water of baptism. It is probable that this transference of faith from the Mosaic sacrifices to the Christian sacraments took place most rapidly in churches at a distance from Jerusalem and largely made up of Gentile converts: the most marked traces of it are found perhaps in the Epistles of St Paul. But the constant celebration of the Lord's Supper must have tended gradually to produce the same effect in the churches of the Circumcision also, and thus to prepare them for the sudden and total abolition of the Mosaic ritual by the destruction of the Temple. If therefore it be possible by careful investigation to ascertain the spiritual import attached by Israelites to their sacrificial language, it will assist us to understand aright the spirit of Christ's own teaching and the institution of the Christian sacraments, as well as the doctrinal teaching of his Apostles.

The most familiar aspect under which the Christian sacrifice presents itself to us is *Atonement* or *Propitiation*¹—an idea derived from the Mosaic sin offering. And an enquiry into sacrificial language naturally commences with an examination into the ritual of the sin offering, as prescribed in the fourth chapter of Leviticus. The Israelite who had committed sin was commanded to bring a kid or lamb without blemish as an offering for his sin, to lay his hands upon its head and slay it in the place appointed². The priest then took

Ritual of the
Sin offering.

¹ These two words are various renderings of the same Greek verb *ἰλάσκεσθαι* to *make atonement*, or of the cognate substantives *ἰλασμός* and *ἰλαστήριον*. But the English version has in the New Testament avoided the term *atonement* and adopted the term *propitiation* in its place, or confounded it with *reconciliation* (*καταλλαγὴ*).

² I have confined myself here to the simple form of the ceremonial without reference to the additional solemnities of the great annual feast or to those enjoined in case of a sin committed by the priest or the congregation: the most important of these were besides the ordinance of the scapegoat, the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood before the Lord, the application of it to the altar of incense or the mercy-seat, and the carrying forth of the flesh with all that appertained to it without the camp to be entirely consumed by fire; but the typical features of the ordinance were substantially the same in its simple form as in the elaborate ritual.



of the blood with his finger and put it upon the horns of the altar¹: he poured out the blood at the base of the altar and burned the fat thereon. The recognised principle of the Jewish ceremonial law that the blood is the life², suffices to explain the significance of these acts: they constituted a solemn surrender of the victim's life to God³. In this manner atonement

¹ This application of blood *to the altar or mercy-seat* as well as the sprinkling of blood before God must be carefully distinguished from the sprinkling of blood *upon the people* or application of blood to the person of the priest. We shall dwell hereafter on the latter type in speaking of the blood of sprinkling: it is sufficient now to note that in the case of the sin offering the blood was brought *to* the altar as an offering from man to God; in the other it was carried *from* the altar as a hallowed gift from God to man.

² See Lev. xvii. 11.

³ This application of the blood to the horns of the altar or the mercy-seat with the sevenfold sprinkling of blood have sometimes been regarded as a second dedication of the life to God after a previous surrender to death as the penalty for sin. But it is clear from the language of Leviticus (iv. 24, 29, 33) that the preliminary slaughter of the victims was not a priestly act at all and did not itself constitute the essence of the atonement. The formal surrender of the victim's life was effected by the priestly act of pouring out the blood at the base of the altar. The sacrifice culminated in this outpouring, and the application of the blood formed a prelude to it. The burnt-offering in like manner culminated in the pouring (*προχέειν*) of blood upon the altar, designated in our version as *sprinkling*.

was made for the sinner, he was pronounced free from the stain of sin⁺ and received again into the congregation of Israel as clean in the sight of God.

To enter into the spirit of this ordinance we must take account of the two persons who played the principal part in it, the sinner himself and the priest who intervened as mediator between him and God. Let us look first at the course of action prescribed for the sinner: the special duty enjoined on him was confession of sin: so far as he was concerned this was the prominent idea, while to the priest was assigned the whole of the ceremonial part, the sacrifice of the victim. In certain cases (Lev. v. 5, xvi. 21) a direct confession in *words* was prescribed: but whether so expressed or not, an emphatic avowal was made in all cases by the *acts* of the offender. He brought an offering for his sin, and by presenting it at the altar, and laying his hands on its head, identified himself with the victim which he presented. By this act he acknowledged the justice of his condemnation, proffered the surrender of his life as




justly forfeit, and submitted to a formal death in the person of his representative. The nature of the victim however excluded in the case of the Israelite sin offering those doctrines of vicarious suffering which have been suggested in the case of the Christian Atonement. No Israelite could imagine that the man was exempted from the penalties of the law because an animal was substituted for him, that the life of an animal was a reasonable compensation for the forfeited life of a man, or that its slaughter met the demands of God's justice and satisfied the offended majesty of the Law. Such an interpretation would have annihilated the true meaning of the sin offering, and tended to make the Israelite trifle with sin in place of impressing its heinousness on his mind. It is obvious that the living animal was taken as the most appropriate representative of the living man, that so the offerer might by an expressive act signify his entire surrender of his own forfeited life.

Accordingly the sacrifice of the victim, important as it was to the ceremonial, was invested with comparatively

Sacrifice of
subordinate
importance.

little moral importance. Its function was entirely subordinate to the spirit of repentance manifested by the sinner's confession. The sacrifice had in effect merely a ceremonial, and therefore an inferior, value. And this estimate of the comparative value of the moral and the ceremonial element is in complete harmony with the principle proclaimed (1 Sam. xv. 22) by the first great prophet of Israel, "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"—a principle echoed (Ps. 1.) by the Psalmist, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the most high"; and by the prophets (Hos. vi. 6), "I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." These Israelite prophets were clearly not designing an attack upon the institution of sacrifice itself; they were simply raising protests against the misinterpretations which laid stress on the ceremonial act, and ignored the spirit expressed in it. Examination of the ordinance leads therefore to the conclusion that the real satisfaction to God's




outraged holiness was made by the offender's solemn humiliation of himself before God, and that the sacrifice was an impressive form, devised to indicate his humble submission to God's appointed penalty for sin—a submission extending to the proffered surrender of life itself.

For behind this institution of sacrifice lay the imperious demands of a perfectly holy law. The Law took its stand in principle on the footing of abstract justice, adopting as its basis the absolute holiness of God. In the forefront of the Pentateuch stood the revelation of God's sentence on the disobedient (Gen. ii. 17), "Thou shalt surely die." In the proclamation from Sinai (Ex. xx. 5) the announcement of God's character, however qualified by assurances of his mercy to those that kept his commandments, was as "a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children." And this law was ratified by stern sentences of death again and again executed upon the generation which perished in the wilderness, until it became an accepted principle of morality that the soul that

The Law pronounced death on every sinner.

sinned, it should die. This revelation of God's absolute holiness could not however from the nature of man suffice by itself alone: it needed large modifications in principle as well as practice, before it could satisfy the conscience, or regulate the government of a people. Justice and policy alike demand the recognition of repentance as well as the condemnation of sin: and it is impossible to maintain an absolute severity of righteousness in dealing with a nation incapable of perfect holiness. A law, which is in itself entirely just and holy, must of necessity work death to a people of carnal and corrupt nature, unless largely tempered by mercy: and this all the more surely, because its perfect justice deprives the penitent of all excuse and therefore of all hope: inasmuch as the awakened conscience recognises its righteousness, but finds at the same time within its own nature a law of sin which forbids steadfast obedience to its commands; and therefore can only utter in despair the bitter cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"



Such a deliverance the Law could not provide directly as the legal right of all offenders; for the essence of law is not redemption, but justice: it must

Sacrifice proclaimed for-giveness to the penitent.

be found in some exceptional provision for the restoration of the penitent. An appeal to God's mercy against the severity of his justice could alone offer a way of escape from this hopeless cycle of sin and death. Yet care must be taken at the same time to maintain the sacredness of the Law. There was a danger, if the way of offenders were made too easy, that the confident assurance of pardon might break down the sanctity of the moral law. The institution of the sin offering met these conflicting demands: while ratifying to the utmost the absolute justice of the Law by the proclamation of death as the merited penalty for sin, it held out to the penitent notwithstanding an assurance of divine forgiveness: it thus practically reversed the sentence of death in the case of every repentant sinner.

But to this promise of forgiveness were attached two important conditions, one moral,

the other ceremonial. The moral condition presents no difficulty; it was that the transgressor must lay his hand on the head of the victim, confessing his sin over him and acknowledging that he had himself deserved to suffer the death which that victim was to undergo. The principle involved in this public act of the offender is obvious: the Israelite of old did literally, what the Christian now does figuratively, when by faith he lays his hand upon the head of the ideal victim and confesses his sins in Christ Jesus. Meanwhile the sentence of death stood unreversed against obstinate and impenitent sin, unconfessed and therefore unforgiven. The impenitent sinner in short was alone excluded from God's universal offer of forgiveness: all hope for the sinner was based upon repentance. So far therefore as the moral teaching of the sin offering is concerned, it was in perfect harmony with the universal conscience of mankind.

But what are we to say of the other, the ceremonial condition attached to the promise of forgiveness, that a victim must be

slain and its blood poured out upon the altar? May we venture to view this as a mere survival of barbarism, which had in rude times expressed the desire of the offender to offer to God some substantial reparation for his sin, and which was only tolerated in a more enlightened age for the sake of its venerable antiquity and its capacity to express the submission of the penitent? By no means; the spirit of the institution forbids our viewing the victim as a mere accidental accessory, or imputing to mere tradition alone the incorporation of sacrifice with the confession of guilt. Whatever stress the Law laid on the act of confession, it is no less certainly true that it required also the outpouring of a victim's blood as an essential part of the ordinance. Without this the sinner remained still unclean in the sight of God: confession did not suffice by itself without the attendant sacrifice to restore the offender. A special virtue was attributed to the blood of victims as God's appointed means of making atonement for sin. The sin offering was indispensable as a means of reconciliation to God.

The beneficial effect of the sin offering was summed up in the single word *Atonement*.¹ It recurs constantly in the book of Leviticus alike in reference to the ordinary sin offering by inferior priests, and to the special sin offering made by the high priest once a year on behalf of the whole nation. Hence the great yearly fast was known as the day of atonement, and the mercy-seat was designated in Greek as the place of atonement². The word is common in classical Greek, and there signifies removal of the wrath of an offended deity. There is however an important variation in the usage of Hellenistic Greek: for whereas the heathen freely used such expressions as propitiating a god, the Septuagint studiously avoids them as alien to Hebrew language and sentiment. The phrases there employed are either to make atonement absolutely; or else the sin to be removed, or the sanctuary to be cleansed, are made the specific objects of atonement. The

¹ The word 'atonement' is in one passage (Lev. i. 4), extended to the burnt offering; all sacrifice being more or less based on the same idea, the necessity of atonement.


² *ἱλαστήριον*.



significant difference of language suggests that the Israelites shrank from attributing to the immutable Jehovah hostile or angry feelings against the sinner which could be removed by an atoning sacrifice; they viewed his sin rather than himself as the special object of God's wrath, and conceived its pollution to extend to surrounding objects.

The belief however that God would visit the sinner for his transgression, and that a sacrifice was necessary to avert The wrath of God averted by atonement. the divine vengeance, and save him from penal consequences, lay at the basis of the Israelite theory of Atonement. Nor are expressions wanting which suggest the excitement in the mind of Jehovah of angry and resentful emotions: for the Jewish Scriptures habitually presented the attributes of Jehovah under the guise of human feelings: it was perhaps hardly possible to convey in any other way a lively sense of the direct and immediate government of the world by a personal God: however this may be, it is clear that they did not shrink from investing Jehovah with the same vehemence of

righteous indignation against evil-doers that might be felt by an earthly king. The Israelite doctrine of the wrath of God, when separated from these anthropomorphic expressions, resolves itself into two great truths, the intense hateful-ness of sin to a perfectly holy nature, and the reality of God's moral government of the world. The punishment of sin, whether it took the form of a natural event or a miraculous intervention, whether inflicted by the instrumentality of human law, or through the operation of man's conscience, was recognised as a direct manifestation of the mind of God. The persistence of these divine punishments for sin, and the inadequacy of mere penitence alone to save the transgressor from its consequences, drove men to seek in the intervention of a Mediator and the sacrifice of an innocent victim some pledge of divine forgiveness. The Mosaic doctrine of atonement gave however only mysterious indications of a redeeming love hereafter to be revealed. Until Christ came to make known the fulness of an almighty Father's love, the law of sacrifice could but hint darkly at some more



effectual atonement in the future by means of which mercy should eventually triumph over wrath, and an entire reconciliation be effected between God and man.

The term *atonement* however, or its synonym *propitiation*, is but sparingly applied in the New Testament to the sacrifice of Christ. St Paul makes use of it once only (Rom. iii. 25)¹, when describing God's purpose of eternal redemption. He avoided the term perhaps as too sacerdotal in its character, inasmuch as he nowhere attributes to Christ the priestly office. He prefers at all events the more comprehensive term *reconciliation*² as better adapted than the Israelite conception of atonement to express the spontaneous love of God manifested in reconciling the world to

Christian use
of the *Atonement*.

¹ The word *propitiation* employed in this passage does not appear to contain any distinct allusion to the sin-offering, but to be applied indefinitely, as in Lev. i. 4, to any reconciliation between God and man effected by sacrifice: for the figures of justification and redemption form the leading idea of the passage; as they do of the kindred passage, Rom. v. 9—11, where the word *reconciliation* takes the place of *atonement*. Our version has incorrectly introduced the word *atonement* in v. 11.

² Rom. v. 10, 11; xi. 15; 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

himself in Christ. This is the only application of the word to Christian use prior to the Epistle to the Hebrews. That Epistle employs it once in describing Christ's priestly functions¹; it also develops the idea of atonement by an elaborate comparison between his eternal atonement and that of the Levitical priesthood. The word was subsequently employed twice by St John (1 Joh. ii. 2, iv. 10) in expressing God's eternal purpose of mercy in his Son, but there is no reference in the context to the Israelite sin offering, and the word may well by that time have merged its Israelite significance in its Christian. Nor is the doctrine of forgiveness

Scanty reference to the type of the sin offering in apostolic language.

of sins in Christ distinctly and exclusively associated by any of the apostles with the type of the sin offering. St Paul ordinarily regards sin in its legal aspect as an offence involving legal penalty, or personifies it as a sovereign and a master exercising dominion over the flesh. He connects forgiveness of sin therefore either with the legal idea of justification, or with the type

¹ Heb. ii. 17; the original is *ἰλάσκεσθαι*, to make atonement.

of redemption¹: while he scarcely glances at the type of the sin offering²; when he does so, it is in close combination with figures of justification and redemption. St Peter and St John also associate the doctrine with types of redemption, or of cleansing³, and not with the sin offering⁴. Yet the blood of Christ is constantly designated in the Epistles as the instrument of this forgiveness. The institution of the Christian Sacraments furnishes an explanation of this apparent confusion of thought which associates blood as the instrument of forgiveness with diverse types: for they combined in themselves the various sacrificial virtues which the Israelite had claimed for the blood of victims. The Sacramental efficacy of the blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper included, as we shall see, at once atonement, cleansing, and redemption: therefore when the apostles proclaimed the

¹ Rom. iii. 25; v. 9; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 2 Cor. v. 21.

² Rom. viii. 3. '*For sin*' is a sacrificial term.

³ 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. i. 5; v. 9; vii. 14; 1 Joh. i. 7.

⁴ The epistle to the Hebrews revives the doctrine of Israelite atonement for the special purpose of the argument; but only to show that it was done away in Christ.

benefits of that holy blood, they included all these in one view. This association of forgiveness of sins with the holy blood appears in fact to have been a growth of Christian language. The first great announcement of the doctrine on the day of Pentecost proclaimed it as the direct gift of God in Christ and associated it with repentance and Christian baptism, not with blood of sacrifices¹. In like manner Ananias called upon the converted Saul to rise and wash away his sins in Christian baptism².

But the promise of forgiveness of sins in

Christ pro-
claimed him-
self our sin
offering.

Christ became in time closely associated with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper: and this was inevitable, for the actual words of its institution revealed Christ as the ideal sin offering. His words are, as recorded by St Matthew (xxvi. 28), "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins." St Luke (xxii. 20) states them, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you." We have here two dis-

¹ Act. ii. 38.

² Act. xxii. 16.

tinct types appropriated by our Lord to himself, and incorporated in the perpetual ordinance of the sacramental cup. Unfortunately the force of both is obscured in our version by incorrect translation, *testament* being substituted for *covenant* and *shed* for *outpoured*¹. Of the new covenant I shall speak hereafter; for the present I confine myself to the type of outpoured blood. I can find no authority for the rendering *shed*. The original word means literally *poured out*, and is used constantly in this literal sense in Scripture, with reference for instance to the wine pouring out of the broken wine skins (Matt. ix. 17), to the coins of the money-changers scattered on the ground (John ii. 15), to the Spirit poured out upon the early church (Acts ii. 17), and to the outpoured vials of God's wrath (Rev. xvi. 1). Again the pouring out of blood denotes, in the New Testament, either the sacrificial outpouring of the blood of victims at the foot of the altar, or an indiscriminate massacre where blood is poured out like water.

¹ The same inaccuracy has been carried unhappily into our Communion Service.

These two meanings are apparently combined in such passages as Matt. xxiii. 35, Luke xi. 50, Rev. xvi. 6; where the outpoured blood of martyred saints and prophets describes at once the sacrifice of holy lives and their reckless slaughter by wicked men. But if etymology and usage can be trusted, it cannot be used like our English phrase *to shed blood* for describing the drops of blood which flowed from a single victim on the cross¹; and the words must therefore have been used by our Lord in that sacrificial sense which was familiar to every Israelite. The presence of the cup full of outpoured wine appears yet more decisive in favour of this rendering; for the two types of wine and of blood adopt the same figure for symbolising the outpoured life of Christ, and in St Luke's Gospel they are associated together by the words of Christ

¹ The revised version has adopted the translation *poured out* in the one Gospel, and retained *shed* in the other. The mention of the cup in St Luke's Gospel perhaps prompted this strange inconsistency; but the language of our Lord and the reference to the outpoured cup are substantially the same in both accounts. The translation *shed* appears to me inaccurate in Acts xxii. 20 also, the sacrificial meaning of the word being there predominant in the speaker's mind; but there the inaccuracy is unimportant.

himself. I conclude that our Lord here applied to himself the technical word regularly used in Leviticus¹ (iv. 7, 18, 25, 34) to describe the pouring out of the warm life blood at the bottom of the altar in the ritual of the sin offering. Now the Law expressly distinguished outpouring of blood from ordinary bloodshed: for in Lev. xvii. 13 those who kill animals in hunting are directed after killing to pour out the blood, because it is the life. The two ideas conveyed by shedding blood and outpouring of blood are in fact essentially distinct; the one suggested destruction of life by death, the other represented the offering up of life to God. In these words therefore of sacramental institution our Lord solemnly presented himself as the ideal sin offering, the victim whose blood was poured out for the sins of men: and in perpetual remembrance of this his sacrifice he instituted a new ordinance to be continued in his church for ever. Practically he substituted the new type of sacramental wine for the old type of outpoured blood; though he did not in direct words pronounce the imme-

¹ The LXX of course use the classical form ἐκχέω of the word.

diate abolition of the sin offering, the sacramental cup took its place in effect. The language of the apostles bears the impress of the change which passed over their thoughts in consequence. The sacramental meaning of the blood of Christ evidently fills their minds to the exclusion of the original type: the virtue of the blood of Christ has become a familiar idea to them, so comprehensive in its meaning as to embrace all the benefits of forgiveness cleansing and life imparted to the faithful in the sacramental cup.

But now to return to Christ's actual words of sacramental institution. The distinction already drawn between shed blood and blood poured out is important; for it indicates that when he spoke of his blood being poured out¹, he was not referring to the material blood which was hereafter to flow from his wounded hands and feet and his pierced side upon the cross, but was employing sacrificial

¹ Greek scholars will note that the participial form employed is the present *ἐκχυννόμενον*, the simplest interpretation of which is that the process of outpouring was at that time in progress. It might however also be employed to indicate an act destined to take place hereafter.

Geometria . . . = 70, Soð e. c. . . = 70, the same Wine

language in its proper sense. Now scripture furnishes a distinct interpretation of this type in Lev. xvii. 11, when it says, "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your lives." The blood signifies the life; and pouring out the blood denoted not the momentary suffering of death, but the absolute surrender of the entire life to God; it included therefore in the case of our Lord the whole living energy which he expended during his mortal life in the work of redemption; and we grievously empty Christ's sacrifice of its real force, when we limit it to the brief agony of death upon the cross¹, and narrow

¹ I fear this tendency to fix the mind exclusively on the commemoration of Christ's *death*, and to shut out the thought of his past *life* on earth and present *life* in heaven, impairs to many minds the force of our sacramental symbolism. We do not in consequence realise sufficiently in the outpoured wine the life which was poured out for us on earth in that prolonged mystery of suffering, and the life of the risen Christ in heaven, which is now, as we drink the sacramental cup, received into us as an inward spiritual life. By identifying the cup with the material blood which was shed upon the cross we degrade the living sacrifice of a living Saviour into the likeness of the dead victims whose blood was poured out at the bottom of the Levitical altar, and which could after all only typify most imperfectly the ideal sin offering.

the eternal sacrifice into a literal counterpart of the Jewish sin offering. The final sacrifice on Calvary was but the consummation of a prolonged surrender of the Redeemer's life to the work of redemption¹: the whole incarnation was one living sacrifice: all his life long from the cradle to the grave he was pouring out his life for the sinner. The sacrifice began when the eternal Son first clothed himself in childhood's weakness, became subject to an earthly parent, and though he was a son, yet learned obedience. It was continued as he endured temptation, and with strong crying and tears addressed himself to his heavenly Father on behalf of the lost

¹ It may be well to remark here, though the observation is perhaps hardly needed, that this argument in no way disparages the value of the cross of Christ: its tendency on the contrary is to enhance our conception both of its spiritual reality and its duration. The annals of heathen cruelty and Christian martyrdom furnish many parallels to the physical sufferings of the crucifixion, if we were to restrict our view to these alone; but I deprecate this limitation as unworthy. Those who lay such stress on the physical sufferings of the cross as virtually to ignore the lifelong wine of sorrow which filled the Saviour's bitter cup by reason of man's sin, and the spiritual agony which found expression in Gethsemane, fail adequately to realise how immeasurably his cross exceeded that of other men in its prolonged strain of suffering and depth of spiritual intensity.

wandering sheep of his flock. It reached its height during the years of his public ministry: the incessant labours which day by day exhausted all his physical strength, the outward persecutions which he endured from the malice of the world he came to save, the inward pangs which tortured his spirit because of the hardness of men's hearts, were a constant outpouring of his blood as a victim for the sins of the world before the agony, the cross, and the grave put the climax on that majestic mystery of sacrifice.

But the sacrifice of Christ was not only a living sacrifice; it was further distinguished from the Levitical system by another element, which of itself completely transformed its whole spirit; for it was a *self-sacrifice*. Christ offered, not another, but himself: the priest was in his case identified with the victim. Men feel instinctively the unreality communicated to the Mosaic sacrifices by the absence of this element of self-sacrifice, and turn from them to the supreme efforts of Roman patriotism, such for example as the Decii solemnly devoting themselves to death for

Necessary imperfection of the type.

their country, as a truer ideal of sacrifice. What means, it is asked, this intervention of a victim between the sinner and his God? how can the blood of animals poured out by the priest at the foot of the altar make atonement? And the Christian answer is clear, that they had only a ceremonial value: the most enlightened among the Israelites themselves recognised them to be nothing more than divinely appointed forms; which declared a need they could not satisfy: they were but types foreshadowing a gospel hereafter to be revealed, and pointing onwards to one who should supply the need they acknowledged. And if the antitype had presented no change in its essential features except the transcendent value of the victim, if it differed from those typical sacrifices only in the substitution of an infinitely more precious victim, it would still remain a mystery how sacrifice could satisfy man's spiritual need of a mediator. For the legal sacrifices were but helpless victims, slaughtered without any choice or will of their own, and gave therefore no hint of the true character of the Redeemer.



But Christ on the contrary offered *himself*. Now herein lies the essence of sacrifice: there can be no true sacrifice at all without a voluntary surrender of that which is our own, whether worldly fortune, or earthly objects of desire, or life itself, for the benefit of another: its central thought lies in self-renunciation dictated by devotion or by love. It is a true Christian instinct in our language which has seized upon the word *sacrifice* to express the self-devotion prompted by an unselfish love for others: we speak of the *sacrifices* made by a loving wife or mother; and we test the sincerity of a Christian by the *sacrifices* he will make for the love of Christ and the brethren. Self-sacrifice constitutes in fact the truest measure of Christian love; it is the practical expression of the love which formed the most distinctive characteristic of gospel teaching. The reason why Christianity has approved itself a living principle of regeneration to the world is specially because a divine example and a divine spirit of self-sacrifice have wrought together in the hearts of men: and thereby an ever increasing number

Self-sacrifice
the only true
sacrifice.

have been quickened with the desire, and strengthened with the will, to spend and be spent for the cleansing, the restoration, and the life of the most guilty miserable and degraded of their fellows. But this element of self-sacrifice, which made the glory and strength of the life of Christ, was of necessity entirely absent from the legal sacrifices. It was the combination of priest and victim in one person, the Lamb of God offering himself to death for the sins of the world, which made the ideal sacrifice really precious: in the fulness of the spirit of self-devotion was manifested the true Redeemer of the world. How unbounded was this spirit of self-devotion, the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us (ix. 14), when it declares that Christ offered himself "through an eternal Spirit." The scheme of redemption was not the offspring of some sudden impulse, such as often prompts men to generous acts of self-devotion. Deliberately, with the fullest knowledge of the fate in store for him, the Son measured the depth from the throne of God to the depths of humiliation and suffering; he knew the whole cost of the sacri-



fice, yet he resolved to empty himself of the glory and endure the agony and cross of shame for the prize of redeeming sinful man from his lost estate. By this self-sacrificing love he became the friend of sinners: he was not content to live his own earthly life very near to God without bringing his brethren also near; nor simply to condemn sin by the perfect example of a sinless life: for this might have prompted no sentiment in the guilty but despair. But by the perfect sympathy of a holy love he made himself one with the sinner, took upon himself all the burden of suffering and death which guilt entails, and submitted himself to every consequence of sin as if the guilt had been his own, and not that of the brethren whom he loved.


Furthermore with this infinite love he united at the same time perfect holiness.

He was the Lamb without blemish

*Holiness of
Christ.*

and without spot, suffering not for his own sins but for those of others, the innocent sacrificing himself for the guilty. He was the holy priest, pure in heart as he was stainless in life. For the mediator, who was to stand between a

holy God and a sinful world, must himself be holy. Perfect holiness was as essential to the work of atonement as perfect sympathy with the penitent. The sympathy of another man guilty like himself could give him no assurance of God's forgiveness. What the guilty dread is the intense holiness of God: can he who is altogether holy receive sinners? can he who cannot bear the sight of iniquity accept the service of the unclean? But Christ was as absolutely holy as he was loving. His utter condemnation of every form of sin, his unstained innocence of life, his intense purity of heart, imparted to his tender love for sinners the force of a divine revelation. For by the perfect union in one person of infinite holiness and infinite love he revealed a new ideal of human character, free from selfishness, pride, and anger. Removed as far from sin himself as heaven is above earth, he nevertheless loved the sinner with a persistence of patient forbearance and an intensity of forgiving love which could not weary or grow cold. Therefore the record of the sinless Son of God who poured out his life for the



sinful possesses a living power beyond all other records to restore hope to the penitent and quicken new life in the fallen.

For in revealing the mind of the Son he manifested at the same time the mind of the Father, who sent him for this especial purpose that those who knew the Son might know the Father also. Here was one who hated sin as God alone can, who condemned it as justly worthy of death, who bore in his own person its bitterest consequences without a murmur as the righteous and necessary penalty due to others' sin; and yet, notwithstanding this intense conviction of the deadly nature of sin, infinitely surpassed all men in forgiving love for the sinner. Such a life was the most perfect revelation of the God-head: the forgiveness Christ pronounced upon the cross was not merely his human utterance; it was the final revelation of the eternal Father that even sin had not separated the transgressor from his love. This exhibition of the divine mind stands forth as an abiding witness that the intense hatred of sin felt by a holy God cannot

Manifestation of the Father's mind towards sinners in the Son.

shut the Father's heart against his sinful children, nor close his mercy against them, but is itself swallowed up in the infinity of divine love. And the Father who had sent the Son to reveal him to mankind, set his seal to the truth of this revelation by exalting the Son to be judge of all and lord of all; that all men might know that as the Son forgave, so the Father also freely and fully forgives every penitent sinner.

Hitherto we have dealt with the atoning
Cleansing virtue
of water and of
blood. virtue of blood as taught by the
ritual of the sin offering: another
branch of their sacrificial law impressed no less distinctly upon the Israelites its cleansing virtue. The elaborate system of purification filled an important place in the Mosaic law. Personal cleanliness ranked high amongst the virtues of the Israelite; the scrupulous care bestowed on the removal of every contamination of the flesh, whether actual or ceremonial, by repeated washings evinces the intensity of Israelite feeling on this subject: the Mosaic law regarded the stain of uncleanness in short with religious abhorrence. Ceremonial pollution acquired un-

der it the position of a moral offence, inasmuch as it was a disqualification for the service of God; and uncleanness became in the eyes of the Israelite a recognised type of sin. The lawgiver manifested here apparently the deliberate purpose to stimulate his people's abhorrence of moral contamination by the repugnance which he inspired in them to physical. The ordinary instrument prescribed for the purpose of purification was of course water. How strictly the Mosaic injunctions of cleanliness were observed in Jewish practice, and how largely they were extended by the traditions of later teachers, may be gathered from the rebukes which Christ addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees on the futility of mere outward cleansing. The baptism of John unto repentance accorded with the practice of his times and with that of Christ's disciples in the use of water as a type of moral purification. Washing in the water of Jordan fitly expressed the sincere determination of John's disciples to put away their sins and lead a new life. But the Law bore at the same time remarkable testimony to the inadequacy of such

outward washing away of sin. For water alone was not sufficient to remove the stain of past pollution, a mightier instrument was needed: the blood of sacrifices must be applied either directly to the person or indirectly to add potency to the purifying bath in which the defilement was to be washed away. Whatever the occasion of this pollution, whether leprosy or disease, natural causes such as childbirth, or accidental occurrences such as contact with a dead body, the one effectual remedy prescribed in addition to water for removal of the pollution thereby incurred was blood of victims. To quote the comprehensive words of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 22), "almost all things are cleansed in blood according to the Law." In faithful conformity with this teaching of the Law the Baptist proclaimed the inadequacy of his own baptism in water. A higher gift of God was needed for the spiritual cleansing and regeneration of mankind. As the blood must be added to the water, so the new life of a divine spirit must be poured into the heart of man for cleansing and for quickening. The long pro-

mised Redeemer, the true Christ should, so spake the Baptist, baptize not with water only, but with water and the Spirit, he should kindle a new fire within the spirit of man, which should be mighty as the refiner's fire to purge away the spiritual dross and cleanse all iniquity from the inward heart of the sons of God.

Accordingly the water of Christian Baptism^v took the place, not of water only, but both of water and blood; for by it ^{Christian Baptism.} was bestowed the gift of a living Spirit. In the beginning of the church, whenever the gift of the Spirit followed not visibly upon the rite, it was regarded¹ as imperfect; and apostles laid their hands upon the converts, that they might receive the Spirit: when by special interposition of God the Spirit was poured out² upon the unbaptized, apostles saw therein God's call to administer the rite. The Hebrew converts of those days needed not baptism to make them members of the church of God, for they were already covenanted members of that church by

¹ Acts viii. 14—17, xix. 1—6.

² Acts x. 47.

*Baptism was a Hebrew rite long before
the birth of Christ.*

the rite of circumcision ; but they did need it in order that they might receive the life of Christ in all its cleansing and quickening power.

The cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ is most emphatically proclaimed by ^{Cleansing by blood combined with Atonement.} St John (1 Joh. i. 7), "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin": and again (Rev. vii. 14), "These which...have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But the Epistle to the Hebrews combines in one view the cleansing and atoning virtues of the blood of Christ. This it does by blending together the two distinct types of the great yearly Atonement and the red heifer in studied combination. For purposes of purification the flesh of a red heifer without spot or blemish, with the blood which remained after sprinkling seven times before the tabernacle, the skin and all that appertained to it, were carried without the camp to a distance from human habitation, and there entirely consumed by fire. The ashes were then mixed with running water and so applied to purify those who had been rendered unclean by contact with a dead body.



of the Hebrews more for national
 was to cleanse from this.

This ceremonial belonged to a different section of the sacrificial law from the great national fast; and the two have few elements in common. The object of the latter was atonement for the sins of the whole congregation; that of the former was to provide cleansing of an individual from casual pollution. Yet these two distinct types are of set purpose so closely combined in a single argument as to blend into one idea the atoning and cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ. The epistle had previously employed both types for the description of Christ's mediatorial work, describing the object of his incarnation in one place (i. 3) as the purification of our sins, of his priesthood in another (ii. 17) as atonement for the sins of the people. But the inadequacy of the single type of atonement to represent by itself the virtue of Christ's sacrifice is more distinctly brought out in ix. 12, 13 by the studied incorporation of this second type in the argument. The effect of this addition is to make the cleansing of the sinner's conscience an essential part of the work of atonement: the author is not content to view sin simply as an

offence provoking the wrath of God; he prefers to exhibit it as an uncleanness whose pollution must be removed.

Now by the combination of this type a new Spiritual cleansing by the blood of Christ. idea is introduced into the great principle of atonement, and the atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ is presented in a new light. For whereas the ritual of atonement aimed at moving God to forgiveness as its immediate object, that of purification aimed distinctly at cleansing the polluted. The change proposed was primarily in the defiled person himself: if any alteration was wrought in the temper of God towards him, it was due as a secondary result to the change effected in his polluted condition. But when atonement is viewed as consequent upon a cleansing power, its efficacy comes to depend no longer on the fact of God's forgiveness, but on the assurance of that forgiveness conveyed to the penitent. The sinner's conscience has contracted defilement as the result of his past contact with sin, corresponding to the pollution left on the flesh by contact with a dead body. His past sin has

reared many obstacles in the way of his return to his heavenly Father. He has to encounter its inward consequences in the actual hold which evil habits have gained over his heart, and its outward consequences in the evil which he has done and cannot undo. The vicious debauchee cannot by a genuine repentance avert the fatal disease he has engendered: nor can a late remorse uproot the bitter growth of guilt and misery which an evil life has sown along its track. But over and above these consequences the hopeless estrangement from God produced by the sense of guilt presses heavily on the awakened conscience. Rekindled hope towards God is essential to his restoration. Before he can venture to approach a holy God at all or hope to begin a new life, he feels the need of cleansing from the taint of an evil past: he cannot rise up at once and serve him without fear; for his past sin has reared a barrier between him and his God. He needs therefore some helping hand, human or divine, stretched out to lift from his conscience this crushing load, some assurance of forgiveness and well-founded hope


of reconciliation with God and his better self. This spiritual cleansing he finds in the assurance of forgiveness through the blood of Christ and in that alone. He needs of course a further cleansing, which may deliver him from the present corruption of sin as well as the sense of guilt: the efficacy of the life of Christ for this purpose is revealed in other types. The whole work of redemption involves moreover continual and repeated cleansing from the daily stains contracted in the course of Christian life even by the purest. But the basis of the new life in Christ is laid in the cleansing virtue of the Christian atonement.

Another sacramental type is borrowed from the greatest of the national festivals. As the institution of the sacramental cup virtually replaced the sin offering, so that of the sacramental bread and wine virtually replaced the passover, though unaccompanied by its formal abolition. The most prominent type belonging to that ritual was the joyful feast of every Israelite household upon the Paschal lamb, which had been solemnly set apart as holy food

The Paschal
lamb a type
of Christ.

to give them sustenance and vigour in the service of their God. When therefore our Lord during this very Paschal feast, and in immediate anticipation of his own death and new resurrection life, gave to his disciples the sacramental bread to feed upon, with the words, 'Take, eat, this is my body,' he clearly indicated himself to be the true Paschal lamb on whom they were hereafter to feed as the support and strength of their spiritual life. Every Israelite Christian learned from that time forward, as he partook of the sacramental feast, to associate the image with his Redeemer's death: and accordingly we find the apostles freely identifying him with the Paschal lamb: St Paul writes (1 Cor. v. 7) of Christ our passover sacrificed for us: St Peter contemplates him (1 Pet. i. 19) under the figure of a lamb without blemish and without spot: while the lamb that was slain forms the central figure in the apocalyptic visions of St John. The many suggestive details of the feast itself have too obvious a meaning to need particular mention: it is enough to observe what significance the historical circumstances of its institution im-

parted to the flesh of the Paschal lamb. It was given to the Israelites at the crisis of their departure from the land of bondage to their promised home; it was the means provided for support and strength during the weary journey before them: they ate it in haste, with their loins girded, their feet shod and their staff in their hands. They could never therefore cease to associate the feast with the deliverance of God's chosen people. Again the blood of the lamb recalled another signal mercy to remembrance: for in the original passover the blood had been dashed upon the lintel and doorposts to provide for every Israelite family an effectual means of averting the sword of the destroying angel: it was therefore God's appointed instrument for restoring life to the firstborn of Israel as a direct gift from heaven, when naturally forfeited on account of the sin of the land in which they dwelt. The historical associations of the festival combined together then the joyful remembrance of two great national mercies, the deliverance from bondage and the restoration of life to the firstborn. Naturally therefore this



festival which commemorated the glorious days of past deliverance became in the later days of Israel's humiliation closely associated with the hope of future deliverance: and so Israelite prophecy adopted the Paschal lamb as the special symbol of the expected Messiah, who was to deliver Israel. Accordingly when the Baptist desired to designate Jesus to his disciples as the Messiah, the name to which he resorted was the Lamb of God; that title being already well understood as appropriated to the Messiah.

But the further addition made by John to this title, "the Lamb of God that taketh upon him¹ the sins of the world," reminds us how deep a meaning prophecy had attached to this type of the Paschal lamb. For those words are based on the marvellous conception developed in the fifty-third

Redemption.

¹ This appears to me the true translation of Joh. i. 29: for if, as is generally admitted, the Baptist's words are founded on Is. liii, where he is said *φέρειν* and *ἀναφέρειν τὰς ἁμαρτίας* (Compare 1 Pet. ii. 24), then *ἄλφω τὰς ἁμαρτίας* must be interpreted in conformity with the language and spirit of that chapter as *taking upon himself*, and not as *taking away*.



chapter of Isaiah of a redemption based on suffering. The very word *redemption*, as used in the New Testament, combines so closely the two ideas, deliverance from bondage and payment of ransom, that it is sometimes difficult to say which of these predominates in its meaning¹. Now the Israelite hope of the Messiah was summed up in this word *redemption*. This was the earnest desire and hope which animated the exulting song of Zacharias for instance (Luk. i. 68), "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and *redeemed* his people": the prophetess Anna spake (Luk. ii. 38) of the holy child to those who looked for *redemption* in Jerusalem: the disciples likewise (Luk. xxiv. 21) trusted that Jesus had been he that should have *redeemed* Israel. This craving for *redemption* first sprang up in the days of captivity. While

¹ *λύτρωσις* or *ἀπολύτρωσις* denotes properly the payment of the necessary price or ransom (*λύτρον*) for the release of a slave or captive. But the idea of the ransom seems sometimes almost lost in that of the deliverance. In Heb. xi. 35 for instance *ἀπολύτρωσις* seems intended to express the same meaning as is conveyed in 2 Macc. vi. 30 by *δυνάμενος ἀπολυθῆναι*, where the question is not of ransom, but of unworthy compliance with sin, as a means of obtaining deliverance.



Jerusalem still stood in its ancient pride as a royal city, the hope of Judah had centred in a king of the house of David : but under the yoke of Babylonian bondage a more urgent need pressed upon them for the deliverance of the captive and the ransom of the slave. The national festival which celebrated their ancient deliverance from Egyptian bondage excited under these circumstances their liveliest enthusiasm : the miraculous deliverance of Israel in past time quickened the captive's hope of a future freedom. To these unfortunate down-trodden bondsmen prophecy presented its new ideal of the Messiah as a suffering redeemer, a true Israelite, who should rescue his people at the cost of sharing in his own person their humiliation and reproach, and pay the price of their ransom by the sacrifice of his own wounds and stripes, endured in meek patience unto death with the heroism of undying faith and love. In the lamb without blemish which was led to the slaughter the evangelical prophet perceived a lively type of his countrymen's suffering lot : the submission of the poor dumb sheep

before its shearers brought to his mind the helplessness of the enslaved Israelite beneath the yoke of heathen masters: he saw the Israelite, the righteous servant of God, despoiled afflicted and slaughtered as his fathers had been in Egypt. But out of the depth of the present darkness his prophetic hope reached forth to a brighter future; he foresaw that this humiliation should not last for ever, but that out of it should issue a new birth of triumphant holiness. As he gazed forward in spirit into the future, the helpless submission of the lamb was transformed into a glorious image of spontaneous self-humiliation. He saw in it a meekness like that of Moses, who chose to suffer with his countrymen that he might redeem them. As that righteous redeemer¹ had arisen from his brethren, one of themselves, who had stooped to bear their reproach before leading them forth in triumph to the land of promise, so now the image of a sinless but suffering redeemer, born of the holy seed, who should ransom his people but not with money,

¹ Moses is entitled *redeemer* (λυτρωτής) by Stephen in Acts vii. 35.

took shape in his thoughts. The Paschal lamb presented a perfect type of this self-sacrificing redeemer: he had paid with his blood the ransom of the firstborn unto new life, and furnished with his flesh the food of the delivered people: in like manner the prophet conceived the future redeemer as devoting his life to ransom his brethren from death and rescue them from bondage, before taking to him his glorious sceptre and reigning for ever as a king of the house of David. The type laid hold on the hearts of the Jews; when after the Restoration they remained still subject to the Gentiles, and the yoke of Greek and Roman masters lay heavy upon them, the hope of the promised redeemer ceased not to sustain their spirits; and visions of approaching redemption continued down to the days of Christ's coming to kindle a glorious light before the eyes of the humble and holy Israelite.


All that was needed to adapt the type to Christian use was to give a spiritual interpretation to the bondage, as that of sin. Our Lord made it his own and set his

Redemption by
blood of Christ.

seal upon it, when he testified (Matt. xx. 28) that the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many, words echoed by St Paul (1 Tim. ii. 6) in identical language. And the association of *redemption* with the blood of Christ, so frequent in apostolic writers, implies their connexion in thought of redemption with the Paschal lamb and so with Christ as our passover. St Paul often connects (Rom. iii. 24, Eph. i. 7, Col. i. 14) *redemption* with the blood of Christ; the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks (ix. 12) of Christ as obtaining eternal *redemption* for us by his blood; St Peter dwells (1 Pet. i. 19) on our being *redeemed* with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish. It is probable that the same type suggested to St John also some kindred language, such as (Rev. i. 5) "*loosing*¹ us from our sins," by his blood, and (Rev. xiv. 3, 4) "having been *purchased*² from among men." On the other hand St Paul resorts to this figure of a purchase in several

¹ The reading *λύσαντι* is adopted by the revised version rather than *λούσαντι*, as it stood in the received text.

² The original word here, and in the passages of St Paul which follow, is *ἀγοράζειν*.



passages (1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23, Gal. iii. 13, iv. 5) with reference apparently to legal purchase and emancipation of slaves and not to sacrificial redemption. The word *redemption* itself is invested however by St Paul with a fuller meaning than any earthly purchase can convey: for it embraces the complete and final deliverance of glorified saints from their earthly bondage to sin and death¹. Our Lord himself applies it (Luk. xxi. 28) to a promised deliverance consequent upon his second coming; "look up and lift up your heads for your *redemption* draweth nigh." So in Rom. viii. 23 those who have already the firstfruits of the Spirit are said to be waiting for the *redemption* of the body: in Eph. i. 14 the Spirit is declared to be an earnest of our inheritance until the *redemption*: in Eph. iv. 30 Christians are warned that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of *redemption*: and in 1 Cor. i. 30 the gifts of God in Christ are declared to be first justification, then sanctification, last *redemption*. In like manner the epistle

¹ The compound form ἀπολύτρωσις used by the original more distinctly expresses this completeness than the simple word.

to the Hebrews sets down (ix. 15) a previous death as essential to the *redemption* that shall be ours hereafter.

The institution of the Sacrament brings one more type prominently into view, The blood of the Covenant. the blood of the covenant. The words of our Lord were according to St Matthew (xxvi. 28), "This is my blood of the covenant"; according to St Luke (xxii. 20), "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." The meaning has been obscured in our version by the substitution of the word *testament* which conveys to English ears the idea of a testamentary disposition. Now it is true that such documents were common in Greece and the word often bore that meaning: but they were unknown to the ancient Hebrews, and the word does not bear that sense in the Old or New Testament. It means simply a covenant, whether between man and man¹, or between God and his

¹ The covenants of Abimelech with Isaac, of Laban with Jacob, of Joshua with the Gibeonites, of David with Jonathan, with Abner and the elders of Israel, of Ahab with Benhadad, of Joash and Josiah with their people, of Edom with Israel, of a husband and wife, are all designated by this word *διαθήκη*



people. All the successive covenants of God with the patriarchs the kings and the prophets were so designated; but one was known especially as *the covenant*, viz. the covenant at Sinai. And this meaning was kept alive in the mind of every Israelite by such titles as 'the tables of the covenant' for the twelve commandments, 'the book of the covenant' for the Law, and 'the ark of the covenant.' The famous prophecy of Jeremiah (xxx. 31—34) again fixed the meaning of *the new covenant* in their minds. When therefore the Lord spake to Israelites of his blood of the covenant, or of the new covenant in his blood, he referred not to his own testament, but to the Father's covenant in his blood: the thoughts of his hearers travelled back instantly to the new covenant of Jeremiah, and to the old covenant of Sinai, which was solemnly ratified in blood of victims.

in the LXX. There is but one reference (Gal. iii. 15) in the New Testament to a human *διαθήκη*, and there the sense demands the rendering *covenant*: the unalterable nature of God's covenanted promise is there illustrated by comparison with a man's *διαθήκη*; which, when once confirmed, is placed beyond the maker's power to alter: this is as false of a testament, as it is true of a covenant.

That impressive ceremonial is recorded in Ex. xxiv. After Moses had gone up to the holy Mount, accompanied as far as the foot of the mountain by the priests Aaron Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and on his return had communicated to the assembled people the Lord's commands, and received their assent, he proceeded to the execution of a binding covenant between God and the people. For this purpose he builded an altar under the hill, with twelve pillars corresponding to the twelve tribes: he then directed young men to offer burnt offerings in the name of the twelve tribes (together with peace offerings of thanksgiving); half whose blood was poured¹ upon the altar, half was reserved until the covenant had been duly read aloud, and the people had pronounced their entire assent to its terms; "All that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient." Then Moses took the blood that had been set aside, and sprinkled it upon the people, and said,

¹ The LXX. use the word *προσχέω* in Ex. xxiv. 6 as well as in the ritual of burnt offering (Lev. i. 5): it is more expressive than the term *sprinkle*, used in our version.

“Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” The ritual of burnt offering, as recorded in the first chapter of Leviticus, explains the first half of this ceremonial : the offerer brought his victim to the altar, he laid his hand upon its head to tender it as representative of himself before God, and the priest then poured its blood upon the altar, and consumed its flesh entirely on the altar fire with all its inward and vital parts. By this entire surrender of the victim's life was indicated the offerer's absolute dedication of his life to God. Such was the burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.

The second half of the ritual, by which the covenant was sealed in blood, consisted in sprinkling the other half of The blood of sprinkling. the blood upon the people. We have already noticed in examining the ordinance of the pass-over the typical meaning of holy blood sprinkled on the lintel of the house, as representing the restoration by God of forfeited life to the family: we shall find again in the ritual of priestly con-

secration a more striking illustration of the same type; and it meets us here in the record of the ratification of the covenant. The two latter ceremonials have many common features: as the blood of one ram, the ram of burnt offering, was in the rite of consecration poured upon the altar, so half the blood of the covenant was poured upon the altar: as the blood of the other ram, the ram of consecration, was sprinkled upon the priests their garments and the altar, so the second half of the blood of the covenant was sprinkled upon the people, and according to Israelite tradition (Heb. ix. 19) upon the book; as it was subsequently upon the tabernacle and its vessels also. In the ratification of the covenant the sprinkling of blood appears then to have indicated the figurative restoration from the altar of the life which had been previously surrendered by the ritual of burnt offering.

Here is recorded the most conspicuous example of the method by which the ancient Israelites ratified a binding covenant with God in blood of victims¹. They

Israelite sealing
of covenants in
blood.

¹ The Greeks and Romans also ratified covenants by the

first surrendered their lives under the figure of a victim on the altar, as wholly dedicated to God: then while these still lay as a holy sacrifice upon the altar, they pledged them by a deliberate promise in the presence of God: and thereupon received them back from the altar indissolubly bound up with the solemn obligation there contracted. An obscure passage in the epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 16, 17) distinctly confirms¹

sacrifice of a victim; and the ritual employed was up to a certain point identical with the Hebrew: for amidst them also the priestly representative of the nation, entitled by the Romans the *fetial*, presented a victim at the altar, laid his hands upon it to identify himself and his people with the victim, and struck it in accordance with a solemn form prescribed for the conclusion of a covenant: but there the resemblance ends; for the accompanying prayer of the Roman *fetial*, that in case of any wilful violation of the covenant by his people God might strike them as he struck the victim, finds no parallel in Hebrew tradition. In spite of the specious analogy between the greater part of the two rituals there is an essential difference in the basis of the covenanted obligation imposed upon the nation in virtue of the blood of the chosen victim.

¹ The English version has involved this passage in hopeless obscurity by introducing the idea of a testament and a testator. It occurs in the middle of a continuous argument in which the new *covenant* prophesied by Jeremiah is compared with the old Mosaic *covenant*; and the same word *διαθήκη* recurs ten times during its course. The arbitrary variation of rendering in this particular passage completely interrupts the chain of reasoning:

this interpretation of the ceremonial. It is there argued that the surrender of life on the part of a man entering into covenant with God was a solemnity essential to its validity; for its ratification took place while he was figuratively dead, his life being laid upon the altar. From the formal and typical death required in the case of the old covenant is inferred the necessity for a real death of the natural man as essential to the validity of the new covenant.

The character of the Sinaitic covenant it fails also to explain satisfactorily the allusions to death which the passage contains: for the Greek word *διαθήκη* could not convey to the ear of an Israelite the same reference to death as the word *testament* does to an English reader, being invariably used in Scripture to mean a *covenant*. The idea of a testament moreover made valid by the death of a testator is entirely foreign to the subject, and can hardly be reconciled with the previous or subsequent context. The two verses may be literally translated as follows: "For where a covenant is made, it is a necessity that death be offered of him that maketh the covenant: for a covenant is valid *only* if men be dead; for is he that maketh it strong at the time (*τότε*) when he liveth?" The point here insisted on is the necessity for the surrender of the old life of the flesh as a condition essential to any valid covenant with God, because incapable of fulfilling God's will by reason of its weakness. In the case of the old covenant this death was formal and typical only: but the new covenant demands a real death of the natural man in those who enter into covenant with God, in order that the divine life of the Spirit may be imparted to them.



on Israel's side is brought before us by the words which Moses puts into the mouth of the people on the occasion: The old and the new covenant.

it was a covenant of absolute obedience on their part to the commandments of God. There is no formal ratification of the covenant on God's part; his promise was contained in the words already spoken by Moses at his command, and recorded in the previous chapter (Ex. xxiii. 20—33) at the close of the commandments and the 'judgments' of God. He had promised, if they would obey him, to send his angel before them to keep them in the way and bring them into the land of promise, to drive out their enemies before them, to deliver them from famine sickness and war, and establish them in peace and plenty in the land. Now rich as this covenant was in promise of national blessings, it bore upon its face two distinct marks of its inadequacy as between God and man. Its promises were limited to material prosperity, and they were conditional on obedience. Therefore although for many generations the faith of Israel found support in it, history records their

successive breaches of the covenant, culminating in the first utter desolation of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah. Then was announced by the last great prophet of Jerusalem (Jer. xxxi. 31—34) a fresh promise of a new covenant which was hereafter to replace the old covenant which God made with their fathers in the day that he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant which should be based on inward grace instead of outward obedience, upon the gift of a new mind and a new heart, together with forgiveness of their iniquities and remission of their sins.


When therefore our Lord spoke to his apostles of 'the new covenant', he referred to this twofold promise of a new inward life through the Spirit and forgiveness of sins. For the elucidation of this type of a covenant in blood we have to depend on the epistle to the Hebrews. St Paul, though he quotes (1 Cor. xi. 25) the words of Christ, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," and dwells much elsewhere under other figures upon the doctrines contained in them, does not ex-

The new covenant in the blood of Christ.



plain the type: but the Epistle introduces the promise of the new covenant by Jeremiah as a specific argument to prove the failure of the old; institutes an elaborate comparison between Christ the mediator of the new, and Moses the mediator of the old: compares the formal death necessary for the conclusion of a covenant with the actual death of the flesh required for the consummation of the Christian covenant of redemption, dwells on the importance of the blood of sprinkling both in the type (ix. 18—21) and in the antitype (xii. 24), and exalts the risen Christ (xiii. 20), in contrast with Moses the mediator of the former covenant, as mighty in the blood of an eternal covenant. From that epistle we learn distinctly what Israelites understood by sealing a covenant in blood. But the blood was not, as of old, the blood of bullocks. Here again, as in the case of the sin offering, the whole character of the sacrifice is changed by the change of the victim. For the Christian mediator, like the Christian priest, offers not another, but himself; not the typical blood of bullocks, but his own. The formal surrender of


life becomes a real surrender: and that the life of the ideal man, the representative of the whole human race before God. A new aspect of the death of Christ is presented; he is seen no longer as a sinless victim for mankind, laying down his life in order to stand between them and the just penalty of their sins: but here we are called to contemplate him as himself the foremost of the innumerable multitude of the human race, the captain of the redeemed host leading the way through death, that they also may enter with him through death into the inheritance of eternal life, as the firstborn among many brethren, the ideal and example of all that were to follow him hereafter, the first to surrender willingly the life of the flesh and undergo the baptism of death, that he might become the firstborn of the resurrection. In this way Christ translated an impressive form into the deepest spiritual reality of our Christian lives: and just as the type of atonement illustrated Christ's work *for us* in blotting out a guilty past and throwing down the barrier which divides the sinner from his God, that the brightness of his




Father's face may be no longer hidden from him, so the new type carries us into the middle of Christ's work *in us*. Atonement brings men to the threshold of Christian life and makes a new life possible by laying the basis of forgiveness; but a lifelong work remains to be achieved: the forgiven people must be cleansed in heart also, must be brought near to God as true children, at once in heart, and in willing service. Two divisions of this work are presented to us in this type of the covenant, a death unto sin and a life unto righteousness; but both alike require for their achievement close union with Christ, union with him first in death, and then in life.

The death of the flesh was not a new doctrine to the disciples. Christ had already taught them the need of an ^{Union with} _{Christ in death.} inward change in themselves analogous to death. He had said (Matt. xvi. 25), "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." He had explained the spiritual nature of this change, and enforced upon them the necessity for the co-

operation of our own will in effecting it, by connecting it with the demand for self-denial, and by urging upon them the need to take up the cross. These lessons are developed by St Paul, when he impresses upon his Roman converts (vi. 6) how indispensable is the crucifixion of the old man for the destruction of the body of sin and for our liberation from bondage to it; when he preaches to the Colossians (iii. 5) mortification of our members that are upon earth, and to the Galatians (v. 24) crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and lusts. The desires of the flesh and of the world which furnish to unregenerate man the motive power of life, the merely human hopes and fears which animate his earthly ambition, which stimulate him in the pursuit of passion or pleasure, or which chain him down in sloth and self-indulgence, must lose their dominion over him: whatever is not of Christ must die within him before he can fully enter into his eternal inheritance of the new life in Christ. Even Christ himself, as heir in his own person to the weakness of the flesh and not exempt from its temptations,



found this dying to the flesh an essential element of holiness, and proposed himself to his disciples as their example and their leader in this necessary preparation for the new life. So St Paul spoke (2 Cor. iv. 10) of himself and his brother apostles as "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." The full revelation of this mysterious union with Christ was of necessity reserved till after the conclusion of his life on earth; for until the resurrection had transformed the mortal nature of Christ, and changed his earthly intercourse with his disciples into a heavenly communion with his church, it was impossible for his disciples to apprehend fully the true nature of the power by which this death of the flesh and new life of the Spirit was to be accomplished, viz. spiritual union with an indwelling Christ. He strove indeed (John vi. xiv. xv. xvi), especially on the eve of his resurrection life, to disclose to them some perception of the mystery, but his lessons were probably designed to bear their full fruit in the future, after the teaching



of the resurrection and the Spirit had unlocked the secrets of spiritual life in Christ, rather than in the present. So too the sacraments were an ordinance designed for his future church: and the type, which he adopted in his words of institution, of the new covenant in his blood was perhaps imperfectly apprehended at the time: but the sacramental mystery was unveiled to his church in due season; and it was seen that Christ had sealed in death a new covenant of eternal life, surrendering at once his own life and ours also, so far as we are truly his, that we may thereby become partakers with him in the eternal life which he has himself received back from God.

For this union with Christ in death is but a preliminary step towards the higher life of the Spirit whereby we are united to him in life. We have seen in the case of the Mosaic covenant that the blood of sprinkling denoted the bestowal from God's altar of a new and hallowed life, linked in abiding covenant with God. Now the victim who sealed in his blood the new covenant was the Lord

The Christian
blood of sprink-
ling.



Jesus himself: and as this victim did not perish in death, so this Christian blood of sprinkling, which is the life of Christ himself, was not only bestowed once for all at the end of his mortal life, and then lost to us because removed from earth to heaven, but abides still as a precious gift of God to man and a mighty power of heavenly life within man, a perpetual seal of the eternal covenant between God and the people of Christ. Accordingly in the first epistle of St Peter (i. 2), and in the epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 24) the blood of sprinkling is mentioned as the climax of our Christian privileges. The latter passage compares it with the blood of Abel, inasmuch as that also sent forth from the grave a living voice, but only to testify to the superior excellence of the blood of sprinkling, whose voice proclaims a mightier and more blessed resurrection life, in which all the covenanted children of God have their portion. The new covenant, as announced by Jeremiah (xxxii. 33), had contained a promise of spiritual life in the new mind and the new heart which God was hereafter to bestow; but Christ, by

appropriating to himself this type, now for the first time revealed both the source of its birth and the condition of its living growth: it is only by participation in his life that we receive and maintain our life. To convey this truth more clearly to our minds he adopted in place of the sacrificial type of the blood of sprinkling the more expressive token of the sacramental wine. The wine, in which they drink in the life of Christ, has imparted to later generations of Christians a fuller sense of the satisfaction of the spirit's need; but the new type needed time for the development of its full spiritual force; therefore Christ caught up at once for his apostles all the meaning of the old sacrificial type, while it still retained its vitality; and transferred the virtue of the blood of sprinkling to the new sacramental ordinance. Whereas too the sealing of the covenant had been a special occasion, he made this ordinance perpetual in his church, as an ever new promise of forgiveness, and constant source of spiritual life, ever springing up afresh for the life of his church in all future ages. The sacramental



wine has superseded the blood of sprinkling and Christians therefore now find in it a more lively image of our union with Christ in life. The same spiritual truth has been expressed in other figures likewise; St Paul for instance described this spiritual life (Rom. vi. 4, Col. iii. 1) under the image of a partnership in Christ's resurrection. But the original words of consecration embodied the ancient Jewish type, and a clear comprehension of its significance is essential to the right interpretation of those words.

The same idea of a new and holy life given by God after the surrender of our own natural life presents itself again ^{Priestly consecration.} in the type of priestly consecration already alluded to. The solemn ceremonial by which the priest was separated from his brethren for the life-long service of God is prescribed in the eighth chapter of Leviticus. The special offering there appointed in addition to the customary sin offering consisted of two rams, one of burnt offering, one of consecration, on which the candidate for the priesthood successively laid his hands as representative of himself. By pouring the blood

of the first upon the altar, and by burning all its parts in the altar fire he declared the entire surrender of himself and his life to God; by receiving the blood of the second on his right ear hand and foot, upon his person and his garments, by taking the fat the vitals and the flesh into his hands and solemnly presenting them before the Lord previously to their consumption on the altar, he acknowledged that God had imparted to every organ and every faculty a new and hallowed life, that thenceforth his body and his life were the Lord's, to be spent wholly in his service, and that his very garments were thenceforth to be holy to the Lord.

So familiar to the Jewish divines was the spiritual interpretation of this rite that the mystical philosophy of Alexandria had already seized upon the image of priestly consecration, when enlarging on the necessity for mortification of the flesh. In the language of Philo the initiation into the sublime mysteries of the heavenly life, i.e. of religious contemplation and self-denying as-

Consecration implied the passing through death to life.

ceticism, was viewed as a consecration to the only true priesthood, a consecration which involved a triumph of the spirit over the vanquished and dead flesh¹. The transition from this typical application of the term in the service of Platonic mysticism to the employment of it in illustration of the Christian doctrine of self-denial and the bearing of the cross was natural and easy. When therefore the Epistle to the Hebrews developed the idea of Christ's heavenly priesthood inherent in his eternal Sonship, and instituted an elaborate comparison between his priesthood and the Levitical, the thought of his consecration to this eternal office by the sufferings and death through which he passed in his Incarnation followed by inevitable sequence. If he be indeed our eternal priest, he must have received priestly consecration, and that by no formal, but an actual and most real surrender of his life to God. That surrender was consummated at the close of his earthly life; and the Epistle declares (ii. 10)

¹ Compare Philo 3 *Vit. Mos.* § 17 and 3 *L. All.* § 23.

this consecration through sufferings to have been in entire harmony with the character of the Eternal God¹: it dwells (v. 7—9) on the value of these sufferings for consecration of the Son: it contrasts (vii. 28) his eternal consecration with the Levitical consecration of mortal

¹ Our version has rejected the Levitical meaning of the original *τελειούν τελείωσις* wherever they occur except once; it has however distinctly admitted in that one case (vii. 28) the connexion between the Epistle and the Levitical sense of the word in Ex. xxix. 9: consistency demands the same rendering throughout that section of the Epistle which compares the priesthood of Christ with the Levitical. The consecration of those priests was a definite legal ceremonial, described by the technical term *τελείωσις*, in virtue of which they had been admitted to the priestly office. Every Hebrew knew the term and what was meant by it. In like manner the consecration of a spiritual priest conveys a precise meaning: but if this well-established meaning of the word be set aside, and the vague expression 'to make perfect a priest' be substituted for it, the true symbolism of the Epistle is so far lost sight of. The objection which has been urged that the form employed by the LXX. is always *τελειούν τὰς χεῖρας* is refuted by Ex. xxix. 9, where they have *τελ. Ἀαρὼν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ*. Compare also Lev. xxi. 10. In two other passages of the New Testament (Luk. xiii. 32, Phil. iii. 12) the same word is employed to describe that consummation of Christian life which is wrought in death, once by our Lord himself in speaking of his own approaching death, once by St Paul with a similar anticipation. The rendering, however, in these passages admits of more question than in the Epistle to the Hebrews from the absence of any reference in the context to priestly consecration.

priests: and proceeds to argue (ix. 9, x. 1) the inadequacy of the Levitical. Furthermore Christ, being himself consecrated a priest in heaven for evermore, consecrates his brethren also to a heavenly priesthood. As St John declares (Rev. v. 10) that he has made us priests unto God, and St Peter (1 Pet. ii. 9) that we are 'a royal priesthood', so the Epistle views (x. 14) Christians as consecrated; their consecration is not indeed completed until they too after the likeness of Christ have passed (xi. 40, xii. 23) into the heavenly and eternal life: but they are already by the death of Christ as their representative consecrated in anticipation to a heavenly priesthood, set apart here on earth by application of the blood of Christ unto a holy ministry, that they should as true and living sons of God render the holy service of a spiritual priesthood in thankful and adoring love.

From the figure of *consecration* the transition is natural to that of *sanctification*; for the two rituals were united in ^{Sanctification.} the appointment of a Levitical priest. The law recognised two kinds of sanctification, the one

- general and secular, the other special and religious.

1. Persons, cattle (unclean as well as clean), land and houses were sanctified, i.e. made holy to God. They became thereby the property of God: and in this appropriation consisted the essence of the dedication; for except in the case of sacrificial animals they were redeemable by simple payments of money (see Lev. xxvii.).

2. The priests, the tabernacle and its vessels, were dedicated in perpetuity to God's service, and were inalienable. The ceremonial prescribed for effecting this more solemn sanctification was anointment; and for this sacred use a special mixture, called the holy anointing oil, was set apart (Ex. xxix. xxx. xl.). The same anointment was afterwards extended to kings, and an inviolable sanctity was thereby communicated to their persons. The holiness however with which priest or king was invested by this anointment was outward and ceremonial: it belonged to inanimate objects, such as the temple and the altar, as well as to persons, and did not imply any inward change of per-

sonal character. All that belonged to God was holy, his land and his sanctuary as well as his people and his priests. All demanded to be guarded with the most scrupulous care from the contamination of uncleanness. Even the solemn injunction, "Ye shall be holy as I am holy," was originally used as emphatically (Lev. xi. 45) for the enforcement of the purely ceremonial law, as (Lev. xix. 2, xx. 7) of the moral law. The close relation into which men were brought with God and his service by their outward position and office as his servants and his priests was recognised in the beginning as giving a higher claim to sanctity than any superior excellence of character. But the recognition of God's ideal holiness educated the conscience of the Israelite to demand a higher ideal of holiness in all who claimed a more intimate relation to God than belonged to other men. The holiness of God constituted an obligation on his people and his ministers to shape their lives in conformity with his character. The fact that they were holy to God led inevitably to duties of personal holiness whose

stringency was proportioned to the nearness of their association with his name. The Psalmist and the Prophet carried still further the development of the obligations, spiritual and moral, incumbent on a holy nation and a holy priesthood¹: and taught the true sanctification of the spirit. Hence the figure of *anointment* also, as being the appointed vehicle of outward sanctification, was employed to describe the bestowal of the Holy Spirit: and the future Saviour became known to the people by the title of the Christ², i.e. the *anointed*, because the Spirit of God was to be upon him for the fulfilment of all his holy and gracious purposes of mercy and loving kindness upon earth³. The same figure was freely employed by Christian apostles in reference to the gifts of the Spirit, though laying on of hands had taken the place of anointment as the ordinary outward means of imparting those gifts⁴. They used also the word *sanctification*

¹ Ps. li. 10, 11, lxxxvi. 2, Is. iv. 3, lvii. 15.

² John i. 41.

³ Is. lxi. 1.

⁴ Acts x. 38, 2 Cor. i. 21, 1 John ii. 27.

to denote either the original gift of the Spirit to those who were called, or his continued influence on the heart¹. But the Israelite use of the term to express an outward sanctity attached to offerings and persons, vessels and meats, still holds its ground in the language of the New Testament². And this use helps us better to understand the connexion of sanctification in the epistle to the Hebrews with the outward application of blood³. That application is of course typical, the blood of Christ being symbolical of the life of Christ whereby the spirit is quickened into new life. Christians, being regarded in the Epistle as consecrated priests unto God, are described as having been sanctified to their holy office by application of the blood of Christ, just as the Levitical priests were by application of the blood of victims. It is remarkable that the blood of consecration here supersedes the holy oil as the

¹ 1 Cor. i. 2, vi. 11, 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, v. 23, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 1 Pet. i. 2.

² Matt. xxiii. 17, 1 Cor. vii. 14, 1 Tim. iv. 5, 2 Tim. ii. 21.

³ Heb. ix. 13, x. 29, xiii. 12.

instrument of sanctification: this may however be explained perhaps by the close association of the two together in a single ceremonial. But the reference to blood as the typical instrument of sanctification involves a further departure from the ordinary apostolic sense of the word, in so far as that is expressive of the abiding influence of an indwelling spirit, for sanctification in blood must be limited to the immediate result produced upon the convert by the life of Christ at once imparted to him.

A brief summary may serve to exhibit at a single glance the extent and variety of the sacrificial types by which the Israelite altar prepared the way for the coming of the Redeemer. The sin offering taught the Israelite the need of some atonement over and above mere confession of sin to avert the wrath of God, and the value of a sinless victim pouring out his life blood for assurance of forgiveness to the penitent. The cleansing virtue of blood, more mighty than that of water, foreshadowed the spiritual washing of baptismal regeneration and the spiritual cleansing of the

Recapitulation.



conscience by the blood of Christ. The Paschal lamb reminded him how God had of old delivered his people from bondage, had fed them with holy food to strengthen them for their journey to the land of promise, and restored the forfeited life of their firstborn: it thus anticipated Christ's redemption of his people from the bondage of sin by the sacrifice of his own life, and the sacramental life imparted by feeding on the body and blood of Christ. The blood of the covenant contained a double type: it typified first the surrender at God's call of the earthly motives and fleshly desires which make up the natural man, secondly the restoration from God of a new and hallowed life linked in indissoluble covenant with God: by this means it paved the way for the sacramental doctrine of union with Christ, both in his death and in his resurrection life. The ritual of priestly consecration enforced more distinctly the same principle that the service of God requires entire self-surrender and the infusion of a divine life into every faculty and organ of our being. Finally the special requirement of outward holi-

ness in the servants of God educated the Israelite to discern the necessity for that inward holiness in all who would draw near to God, which can only be quickened by his Spirit. But the nature of the ideal sacrifice which was to complete this sacrificial system and satisfy the needs which it proclaimed was most imperfectly revealed before the actual coming of Christ in his own person. He was himself the central sun round which the whole system revolved: and type and prophecy remained obscure until the glory of the antitype, the long promised Messiah, illumined with a flood of heavenly light the dim world of human hope, and centred upon him the living faith of all the true Israel of God.



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